NEWS / A2

Melo Commission wraps up probe; to submit report early January

BUSINESS / B1

Income tax collection falls short of target; BIR blames interests' decline

ACROSS / A18

70 Pangasinan fishermen missing after huge waves sweep fishing boats near Spratleys

"Lahat sutalayin, dagat man ang pagitan."

See pullout

'Don't romanticize OFWs to minimize social costs'

By Jerome Aning

PERSISTENCING OVERSEAS FILIPINO WORKers as "modern-day heroes" should be stopped if the government wants to minimize the social costs of employment abroad, according to the Department of Labor and Employment's lead researcher.

"Overseas workers go abroad for personal

DOST/ A7

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS
Wednesday, December 20, 2006 ★★ 8 sections / Vol. 22 / No. 12 P18
www.inquirer.net

Airlines' wish for all seasons: Quiet at Naia

By Nikko Dizon

AIRLINE COMPANIES are still hopeful that silence will soon reign at the busy 4-piece International Airport (Naia)—all in the name of tranquility for harried passengers.

AIRLINES/ A20

TRAFFIC-STOPPING SANTA NAMED NOEL. All dressed up like the season's most popular character, S/Sgt. Noel Quilatan of the Bonifacio Global security services is a show-stopper as he directs traffic daily at the Mckinley intersection at the Fort from 7 a.m. to 9 a.m., and from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m.

GMA talks Cha-cha anew

Defensor: It could lead to perdition

By Christine O. Avendaño and Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

DESPITE A SERIES OF SETbacks, President Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday vowed before an international gathering to pursue with vigor her goal of overhauling the country's Constitution.

But a key presidential adviser, Chief of Staff Michael Defensor, warned that ramming out such a plan before the May 2007 elections would be courting disaster. He said the Cebuano's job was to protect Ms Arroyo from going "down the road of perdition."

Ms Arroyo declared her resolve to push ahead with Charter change in a keynote address at the 40th anniversary of the Asian Development Bank in Manda luyong City—but she acknowledged there was need for "a satisfied national consensus on the reasons and timetable." (See related story on Page A2.)

She did not elaborate but her remarks came in the wake of successive defeats she and her allies had suffered in their bid to amend the Constitution, either through a signature collection drive called a people's initiative, or through a constituent assembly (Con-ass), where members of Congress themselves would tinker with the Charter.

GMA TALKS/ A20

It's Christmas in jail for Smith; CA nixes TRO

By Armand N. Nocum and Tarra Y. Quismundo

AMERICAN RAPE CONVICT LANCE Cpl. Daniel Smith will spend Christmas in the Makati City Jail with the Court of Appeals rejecting for now his petition for a temporary restraining order on his commitment at the facility.

In a resolution dated Dec. 18, Associate Justice Apolinario Bruselas Jr. of the appellate court's special 11th division said the issuance of a TRO was "not warranted at this time" because the commitment order issued by Makati Judge Benjamin Pozon had already been enforced.

Bruselas said a TRO would in effect declare Pozon's order irregular without the benefit of a trial on the merits of the case.

The appellate court also downplayed Smith's claim that he stood to suffer serious and irreparable injury if he continued to stay at the city jail pending the determination of his petition.

"A [TRO] may not be granted at this time because the merit of the herein petition, precisely involves a determination of the regularity of the act of respondent in directing confinement in the MCJ. The order has been imple-

IT'S CHRISTMAS/ A20

Christmas lights blinking again in Samar, Leyte; Albay, Sorsogon soon

By Wee S. Lubes
Inquirer Visayas
and Bobby Q. Labulan
Inquirer Southern Luzon

CHRISTMAS LIGHTS ARE NOW blinking in Samar and Leyte, days after Typhoon "Seniang" battered the islands and toppled electric posts and transmission lines.

But twinkling Christmas lights in Albay and Sorsogon will have to wait until tomorrow, according to National Transmission Corp. (Transco).

Supertyphoon "Reming" toppled electric posts and transmission lines in Albay, Sorsogon and Catanduanes on Nov. 30, leaving those provinces without power.

Transco has energized Leyte and Samar since Dec. 16 after it restored all power transmission structures.

Edres Legaspino, corporate communications officer of Transco in Ortigas City, said Seniang had toppled 40 transmission structures in Samar and Leyte.

Legaspino placed the damage to

CHRISTMAS/ A11

Hard-up guard returns ₱500,000

By DJ Yap

WERE HE A MAN INTERESTED A CONscience, George Bacod, a security guard in a Quezon City condominium, would be preparing a generous Christmas treat for his family by now.

All his monetary troubles would have been gone. The minimum wage-earner would finally be able to send his two boys to school, and he would even be able to afford a better place for them than their rented room in Antipolo, Rizal.

But Bacod, 27, believes in karma.

When a bundle of peso and dollar bills amounting to more than ₱500,000 fell on his lap one November evening, he did exactly what he believed a decent man should do. He returned it to the owner.

HARD-UP/ A23

Stories from my hometown after 'Reming'

By Jocelyn R. Uy

(Editor's Note: This essayist is based on entries written on Dec. 9-12.)

LEGAZPI CITY—THE WORKFORCE begins to bend home as the last rays of the sun cast a soft light on Mount Mayon and the sky gradually turns dark.

Still without electricity more than a week after Supertyphoon "Reming" descended with fury and killed a thousand people, the city's business district is mildly crippled starting at 6 p.m. With 30 minutes there is only a pall of gloom.

The night is young but for my hometown, another day has ended too soon.

In our small neighborhood, there are no children in the streets singing Christmas carols. There is only a chorus of whirring generator sets in the few households that can afford them.

But the lights are actually bearable. In the bright light of day the devastation and misery left by Reming are on full view—a sad, awful spectacle.

I am home for a brief stay, and the aftermath of the typhoon is still raw and plain to see even during a short walk to

STORIES/ A11

THE BEREAVED children and grandchildren of Benjamin accompany his body to the House of Representatives.

Ex-soldier detained over solon's slay

By Philip C. Tubeza and Armand N. Nocum

SPEAKER JOSE DE VENECIA YESTERday said a 40-year-old former soldier had been detained for questioning in the murder of Abra Rep. Luis Bersamin Jr. and his bodyguard even as one official speculated it could possibly involve communists out to avenge the slayings of leftist militants.

De Venecia said during Bersamin's necrological service that the man armed with a pistol had been arrested in the Ilocos region and was undergoing investigation in Manila. He had no further information but said he had also learned that a ₱200,000 "down payment" had been given for the kill.

De Venecia announced that the

EX-SOLDIER/ A11

HONORS FOR A FALLEN COLLEAGUE. The remains of Abra Rep. Luis Bersamin Jr. are brought to the House of Representatives for necrological service and Mass.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2006

WEATHER FORECAST

Second FRONTPAGE

Looks like reenacted budget again for '07

By Philip C. Tubeza and TJ Burgonio

THE GOVERNMENT MAY AGAIN HAVE TO OPerate on a rolled-over budget next year with Congress expected to fail to pass the P1.126-trillion proposed 2007 budget before it goes on holiday recess later this week.

"Despite our frenzied efforts to avoid another reenactment, I see every-party Congress could not give the nation a reason to be merry on Christmas or to be prosperous in the New Year," said Albay Rep. Joey Salceda, chair of the House appropriations committee.

Salceda and Sen. Franklin Drilon, his Senate counterpart, believe there may not be enough time to pass the measure by Thursday after the bicameral conference committee failed to break a deadlock and decided to suspend the conference indefinitely last night.

The government may have to run on the reenacted P600.16-billion 2005 national budget "for the second time" at least for the early part of next year, said Salceda.

He said Congress may even have to pass a supplemental budget of P6.5 billion for the May 2007 national elections in a "worst-case scenario," despite P1.2 billion would be needed for the barangay elections.

Salceda said that despite good will on both sides, which achieved a consensus on the first 98 percent of the proposed budget, the two chambers could not bridge their differences.

The major sticking point was the issue of the P4.7-billion allocation for the Department of Education's fund for schools program, he said.

Salceda said another contentious issue was the transfer of P400 million worth of intelligence funds for the Presidential Anti-Organized Crime Task Force that the Senate wanted transferred to the Department of National Defense.

The House wanted the P4.7-billion created as originally proposed by Malacañang, but the Senate panel insisted the funds be realigned to fund the construction of 9,000 classrooms and the hiring of 16,000 additional teachers.

In the budget she submitted to Congress, President Macapagal-Arroyo allotted funds for the construction of only 12,000 classrooms and the hiring of 15,000 teachers.

The Drilon wrote at least 20,000 classrooms and 18,000 teachers in 2007.

"We thought we could better utilize those funds to close the gap in the shortage of school buildings and teachers," Drilon said.

Salceda said that a reenacted budget would "threaten" the economic growth and poverty reduction targets of the government.

"The country suffers because we would have a reenacted 2005 budget for the first time, when there would also be no tax reforms. Certainly, growth targets are threatened," Salceda said.

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Melo panel completes probe; to let Gloria release results

A COMMISSION CREATED BY THE PHILIPpine government to probe hundreds of killings and disappearances of militant workers and reporters has completed its investigation and will submit its report to President Macapagal-Arroyo in early January.

But Jose Melo, the head of the panel said on Tuesday it would be up to Arroyo to make public the commission's findings.

"We have completed our report and collated all the data," the retired Supreme Court justice told a local radio station, adding the five-member commission had thoroughly "analyzed and investigated the cases of extrajudicial killings."

Melo said his panel relied mainly on reports from the military and police, which basically denied the involvement on the part of an internal purge by the communist New People's Army (NPA).

Local rights groups have said more than 700 leftist activists and reporters have been killed since Arroyo took power in 2001. But the police keep the real figure in 126 and accuse activists and groups padding the figures to undermine the government.

Arroyo's administration has been criticized for failing to stop an upsurge in the killings—usually carried out by masked men on motorbikes—since the start of the year.

Amnesty International said in August the security forces could be involved.

Families of murdered leftist activists and human rights lawyers largely welcomed the inquiry saying it was designed to clear the military and police of any blame.

US-based Human Rights Watch said earlier this year that the inquiry had made little visible progress amid a climate of fear.

Even members of the commission on the ousted Philippine president criticized this inquiry because they were not invited to attend public hearings last month on Negros Island, a hotbed of rebel fighting due to the fertile sugarcane land.

Rogen Reyes, a lawyer for one of the Negros landowners, said the commission heard only from farmers, and complained that the inquiry was created to appease Arroyo's political opponents.

The government created the commission in August 2006 due to mounting international pressure to stop the killings, which have continued on a monthly and sometimes weekly basis.

"The commission was not created to solve crimes," Melo said in earlier statements. "We're here to find out why killings are going on and who probably are the groups responsible."

Reuters

ADB grants RP $653-M loan; GMA shows gratitude for aid

By Christine O. Avendaño

THE ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK YESTERday extended $653 million in loans and grants to the Philippines, mostly to fund the development of the country's power and financial sectors.

The loans and grants were turned over to President Macapagal-Arroyo during the ADB anniversary program of the manila-based bank where she was the keynote speaker.

Ms Arroyo thanked the "premier Asian development institution" for the assistance which she said was "the largest ADB assistance in eight years" as well as for recognizing the economic turnaround of the country, among other things.

"Thank you ADB for agreeing that the Philippines is back! during the media briefing of the $653 million power sector development program loan," said the Chief Executive.

The ADB assistance consists of $450 million for the Power Sector Development Program (which aims to help stabilize the power situation in the country) and $200 million for the Financial Market Regulation and Intermediation Program" (which aims to develop a more efficient financial sector).

Ms Arroyo also thanked the ADB for extending a $3 million grant to Southern Leyte to help the province recover from the deadly February 2006 landslides that buried more than 1,000 people in a single village.

"Thank you for the assistance in the study of the vulnerable areas in the Philippines which unfortunately our hand in natural disaster management," the President said.

Mr Arroyo also thanked the ADB for its "positive response" to the appeal of the Philippines and other developing countries to lower its commitment fees. The fee is imposed on a borrowing country by a lending institution and is usually a certain percentage of the undisbursed amount of the loan.

"I am pleased to note that you will positively on the request of the Philippines and other DMCs to ease the bank's conditionalities," she said.

This will provide developing countries better opportunities to enjoy the benefits of the bank's assistance, according to the President.

Thanking an activist the ADB for issuing statements supporting her government's reform programs, President Arroyo said she would continue to work on other reforms like curbing corruption in the country.

This was being done, she said, by implementing Executive Order No. 366 which created a task force to oversee the infrastructure projects she announced during her State of the Nation Address this year.

Her administration was also using the $20 million assistance from the US Millennium Challenge Account to curb corruption, she said.

"I thank you ADB for your support in all the reforms that we have cited to do across the broad spectrum of our needed reforms—fiscal reforms, financial reforms, power sector reforms and governance reforms," she said.

"We hope that the donor community appreciates the efforts of our government for the needed reforms even with the difficulties that they face," the President said.

China completes Asean cast

By Veh Contreras

BEIJING IS ALSO SENDING WORD THAT IT is coming, officials in charge of ensuring "seamless attendance" at the rescheduled 12th Asean Summit in Cebu nationwide there is no question that the regional meeting will push through this January.

"There's no excuse—both about that, we can't see any problem," Ambassador Ye Leonen, the summit spokesperson, told the business early last night.

"Hindi na pinag-usapan kung tuloy o hindi (We're not talking about whether it's pushing through or not) We are all heading towards a single direction," said Locsin, who also serves as the country's envoy to Malaysia.

Another official involved in the preparations said China had also confirmed its participation in the Asean summit and in the accompanying East Asia Summit.

The official added that no to be identified to do so by the Department of Foreign Affairs' formal announcements...most likely to be made today—regarding the other guest nations.

On Monday DFA Assistant Secretary Lale Cruz said the agency was expected to receive yesterday formal responses from all those members and its dialogue partners on the proposed new dates of the summit, Jan. 12 to 13, 2007.

Cruz reported that South Korea had already confirmed its attendance. Japan and all the other nine members of Asean had also assured the host of their presences.

Asean is composed of the Philippines, Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. Its dialogue partners expected at the Cebu meetings include China, Japan, South Korea, India, Australia and New Zealand.

Witness overhears Jaworski bomb plotters

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

A WITNESS HAS FINALLY SURfaced to confirm that the bombing of the Jaworski taxi at Pasig City Brg. Bahayi "Tindor" Jaworski in Pasig City last week was not accidental but was deliberately planned.

The witness, a 28-year-old native of Batangas, said he stumbled on the day plot while waiting for a ride along Commonwealth Avenue in Quezon City where he overheard an unidentified man talking on his cell phone and adding if Jaworski was already dead.

At about the same time, Jaworski had just jumped out of his minivan in Pasig City before it blew up and engulfed in flames.

While yesterday released sketches of two suspects who appeared to be involved in the bombing based on the testimony of witness.

Eastern Criminal Investigation and Detection Group chief Supt. Felipendo Wycoco told the Inquirer the witness voluntarily went to Jaworski's office at the Batasang Pambansa on Monday to narrate what he had heard and saw on the day of the attack, which he believed might have had something to do with the bombing.

Wycoco said the first suspect was between 28-32 years old, about 5'6" tall and had a mole on his left cheek. The second suspect was about 33 years old, about 5'8" tall and had long curly hair.

The first suspect spoke in Filipino while the second suspect had a Visayan accent, the witness told Wycoco.

"Kumusa na ang asawa ni Congressman Dodot? Buhay ba siya o patay (How's the wife of Congressman Dodot? Is he alive or dead)?" the witness allegedly heard the first suspect saying while speaking on a cellphone.

The witness told police he was on Commonwealth Avenue near the pedestrian overpass in front of the St. Peter Parish when he heard the conversation about 1:30 p.m. on Dec. 12, just minutes after the minivan exploded on C5 road in Pasig City.

The man paused for a few seconds and later sighed, apparently after learning that Jaworski had survived the blast: "Putang...bigo sya ngayon!"

The man on the cell phone allegedly had a companion, who suddenly glared at the witness who was holding a camera.

The second suspect took the witness' identification card and said: "Ano ka ba, sapat? Bakit gusto mo memorya rin (Are you a spy? Maybe you want to do, too)."

The witness said he pleaded for his life, assuring the two suspects that he did not know what they were talking about.

He said the second suspect let go of his card and gave back his camera and identification card. Then the witness just walked away.

The witness had gone to the Batasang Pambansa that day to apply for a job. He was told to just fax the requirements and was on his way home when he overheard the conversation.

Cayetano brings up Jose Pidal acc't at hearing

By Philip C. Tubeo

THE GHOST OF JOSE PIDAL WAS RESURrected yesterday during the House ethics committee hearing on the expulsion case filed by members of the First Family against Taguig-Pateros Rep. Alan Peter Cayetano.

Jose Pidal was the fictitious name on a local bank account that allegedly contained P200 million in political campaign contributions for President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Cayetano, who earlier claimed the First Family also had a fictitious bank account containing millions of dollars, cross-examined the President's son, Pampanga Rep. Juan Miguel "Mikey" Arroyo, for nearly an hour on his familiarity with the details of the controversial Jose Pidal account.

"We want to show that there is a trend here to hide their accounts," Cayetano said.

The Arroyos had filed an expulsion case against Cayetano after the German bank he implicated, HypoVereinsbank, certified that no member of the First Family maintained an account with them.

But Cayetano insists he's not convicted. The young congressman noted that during the Jose Pidal controversy, the Arroyos initially claimed that they did not maintain such an account and even presented a certification to that effect. "However, the bank later declared that there was such an account but it had already been closed," Cayetano said.

The lawmaker insisted that the documentary evidence submitted by the Arroyos...including the HypoVereinsbank certification—still needed to be authenticated.

The red-eye camp, however, accused Cayetano of stonewalling. The Vice Gendarmes said Cayetano's questions about the Jose Pidal issue were "irrelevant and immaterial."

"We gladly we've been here sitting and waiting for him to cross-examine [but] everything he said here is all dilatory. He has nothing to offer.

Mining seen to bring $1B more into RP

THE PHILIPPINES IS LIKELY to attract an additional $1 billion in mining investments in the next two years as foreign players remain keen on video-

reopening or developing new seams, a top industry official said yesterday.

Benjamin Philip Romualdez, president of the Chamber of Mines of the Philippines, said his projections were on top of the $0.54 million already committed, mainly by foreign firms, in 24 projects identified as high priority by the government since 2004.

Unexplored gold

The Philippines, which the government claims has $1 trillion worth of unexplored gold, copper and nickel, has been promoting these projects, arguing that they need fund-raising of at least $6.5 billion.

Romualdez told reporters that the mining sector could eventually rival overseas remittances by Filipino workers for its economic contribution to the Philippines.

"I personally feel that if we were to operate the identified mines, the sector could rival the OFW (overseas Filipino workers) remittances," he said.

Overseas workers sent home $10.7 billion in 2005, equivalent to about 10 percent of gross domestic product.

Not a pipe dream

In contrast, the Philippine minerals sector produced P66 billion worth of minerals in 2005.

"This is not a pipe dream," Romualdez said. "All the big boys are back in the Philippines."

Big foreign firms that have either taken stakes or have expressed interest in investing in the country include Switzerland miner Xstrata Plc, Anglo American Plc., Rio Tinto and BHP Billiton.

Priority projects

Romualdez said that of the 24 priority projects being promoted by the government, five are already in operation, two are under construction, while eight are in their final feasibility and financing stages.

He said fresh investments in the next two years will include a $205 million expansion of a Japanese-owned nickel refinery in Palawan and the $171 million modernization of Atlas Consolidated Mining and Development Corp.'s copper mine in Cebu.

'Black ops'

Romualdez said two cyanide spills at a copper mine belonging to Australian firm Lafayette Mining Ltd. last year "created a blackeye in the industry's advocacy for responsible mining."

He said the accident also put a six-month brake on the industry as environmentalists and the Catholic Church intensified their opposition on against foreign investments in local mineral deposits.

Corrections

IN THE DEC. 15 ISSUE, a story on Page A7—"2 DA execs charged as Supreme slay hearing"—misnamed the rank of Antilina Bacani Jr. as the Philippine National Police. Bacani is a PNP deputy director general—not chief director general.

* * *

IN THE DEC. 16 ISSUE, a story on Page A19—"Peasant leader, 3 others survive attack by gunmen"—contained a number of inaccuracies. Nicanor Barrios, who survived an ambush in Compostela on Dec. 10, is a rehab worker United Workers of Istrapa—not Isarafo—Farms. Barrios is a labor leader—not a peasant leader. Moreover, Barrios and three of his companions were riding on motorcycles—not walking—on their way to work when they were ambushed. Fredi Banana Agri-Industrial Corp. is now owned by A.Mills (Samahang Nayon Fruits Corp. Chairs/Sec.)—not the Ayalas Business Group.

* * *

IN THE DEC. 18 ISSUE, two front-page stories—"Bishops push cases Cha-cha" and "A rally with no banners, streamers"—misspelled the name of one of the party list representatives who was present at the Church-led prayer rally in the Luneta on Sunday. The party-list representative's name is Risa—not Nisa or Nissa.—Dan Nonoy Bengzon

* * *

Readers may contribute requests for correction of factual errors in writings in the Inq7.net, Philippine Daily Inquirer, 5th Floor, Media Center, Chino Roces Avenue Extension, Makati City, fax No. 897-97-93/98, e-mail address: theyaskin@inquirer.com.ph.

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A. Felipe; 83

AMALIA MELO-FELIPE, 80/F/R of Guiday Inquirer Magazine editorial assistant Sharon Felipe, died on Monday at the age of 83.

She is survived by her husband Manuel, children Jenna, Caroline and Sharon, daughter-in-law Maia, grandchildren Emily, Matthew, Samantha and Columbanus, nieces, nephews and grandchildren.

Her remains lie at the Inquinaro Grand Chapel, Col. J. Hilario St., Ipsut, Cavite. Interment will be on Dec. 21 at the Media Memorial Park, Tagaytay City, Cavite, after the 2 p.m. memorial service at the Immaculate Church.

M. Colores; 105

MARIO A. COLORES OF LIBmanan, Camarines Sur, died yesterday of natural causes. He was 105.

He is survived by his children Adelina and Clarissa Iguina, daughter-in-law Lourdes, grandchildren and great grandchildren. Also, the only Vilma died 10 years ago.

The remains is set for 3 p.m. today at the Loyola Memorial Park, Marikina.

The Daily Gospel

Wednesday, December 20, 2006
3rd Week of Advent

1st Reading: Is 7, 10-14
Gospel: Luke 1:26-38

In the environment, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth. He was sent to a young virgin who was betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the family of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.

The angel came to her and said, "Rejoice full of grace, the Lord is with you." Mary was troubled at these words, wondering what the greeting could mean.

But the angel said, "Do not fear, Mary, for God has looked kindly on you. You shall conceive and bear a son and you shall call him Jesus. He will be great and shall rightly be called Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the kingdom of David, his ancestor; he will rule over the people of Jacob forever and his reign shall have no end."

Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, if I am a virgin?" And the angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore, the holy child to be born shall be called Son of God. Even your relative Elizabeth in her old age is with child, although she was reputed to have a child, and she is now in her sixth month. With God nothing is impossible."

Then Mary said, "I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be done to me as you have said." And the angel left her.

Commentary:

An Advent homily cannot always avoid trying to ask for a sign from God. But by Advent's end — for Christmas is always God's coming of Jesus with our nature. But he will get on our way — a young woman (probably) ADDITIONAL will be the presence of God with his people. On second. The name of Immanuel, for with God coming our mission. Gabriel comes to Mariam blessing her and asking that she bear a child in behalf of her people to be with us. God of the Most High, and the Holy Spirit will be overshadowed. Mary's response to the angel's announcement is one of total surrender to God's will. Yes, she responds in obedience to the Word of God.

God wants to be born in us that we may be "Emmanuel."

Every Makati fireworks blast for benefit of typhoon victims

By Dave V. Quintanilla

FOR JUDY MYLTE that rocketed fun, smoke light up the skies of the country's financial capital on New Year's Eve, a family in typhoon-stricken Bicol and the Visayas will be accorded a decent meal.

The mountain-resort favorite also plans to welcome 2007 in Makati would benefit typhoon victims hundreds of kilometers away, as the city government has linked the event into a fundraiser for victims of Super typhoon "Reming" and Typhoon "Seniang."

"The Makati New Year's Eve countdown is an opportunity for us to show that we Filipinos can come out with each other in times of need. While there were setbacks in 2006 that brought disaster, there are more reasons to hope for a better new year," said Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay in a statement.

Slated by the mayor, the New Year's Eve fundraiser aims to raise as much money as possible from Makati's business establishments and individuals who will attend the six-hour program at the corner of Ayala Avenue and Paseo de Roxas on Dec. 31.

"The campaign of the program is 'see you come 2007' with hope," said Joey Salgado, chief of the Makati Information and Community Relations Department.

"Before the typhoon, we had been getting sponsors for the event. But because of the devastation the typhoons caused, the mayor decided that the corporate sponsorship we collect should go to the victims of the typhoons," Salgado told this reporter.

At the Clark Special Economic Zone in Pampanga, Subic-based Global Services, a multinational business process outsourcing provider, on Tuesday contributed P2.5 million to the government's relief efforts for victims of Typhoons Reming and Milenyo.

Billy Tolisch, Intelisent branch manager, handed the check to President Macapagal-Arroyo, underscoring the firm's facilities in the economic zone.

Speaking to reporters before Ms Arroyo's arrival, Tolisch said Intelisent branch would handle 15,000 employees in 24 delivery centers worldwide, including 2,000 in the Clark complex when the amount brought in by the company's "Can 2 Give" program.

In Makati, the cause of the effects if the typhoon could be thought it would be a nice gesture to help them out. Traditionally, the New Year's Eve countdown is all about entertaining, but why not make it an occasion where we could commemorate the victims of the typhoon?" said Tolisch.

Superimposition Burning displaced hundreds of thousands of families in Bicol, while battering devastated parts of the Visayas, crippling the bustling tourist island of Boracay in Aklan.

Besides corporate sponsorship, Makati aims to source funds from vendors in the New Year's Eve program, where the country's top bands will hold a concert.

The free concert will feature top acts Imago, Rebyuwmen, 6-Cyclic Mind, Backchords, Sandwich, Gamboa, Pendong and Arnel Cortez Band. Event organizer Eric Nisay will also perform. With Tonette Orejas, Inquirer Central Luzon

VERY YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS
Collectors use their lamps smoke at night as they sell gift wrappers in Baguio City to raise money for gifts this Christmas. Some of the boys belong to the Islamic faith, but Christmas is Christmas to the very young.
INQUIRER/LIBERTY PORTUGUESE

Cold front saves RP from another storm

By Norman Bordadora

THE COLD AIR MASS RESPONSIBLE TO THE northeast monsoon and the cold front north of the archipelago proved to outwit for tropical storm "Tomas."

The brewing storm had lost its energy and by 2 p.m. yesterday it was a shallow low pressure area estimated to be 540 kilometers east of Luzon, based on satellite and radar data.

"The cold air mass is huge. It's like a cave and Tomas was like a small rock in it. (The) weather disturbance was overwhelmed," Nathaniel Cruz, chief of the weather branch of the Philippine Atmospheric Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration, told the Inquirer.

Cruz said the Bicol region, eastern Visayas and Quezon would experience rains in a result of the northeast monsoon. Rains were also expected over eastern Visayas, he added.

"The (Metro Manila) will be pleasant as we will have cool weather," Cruz said.

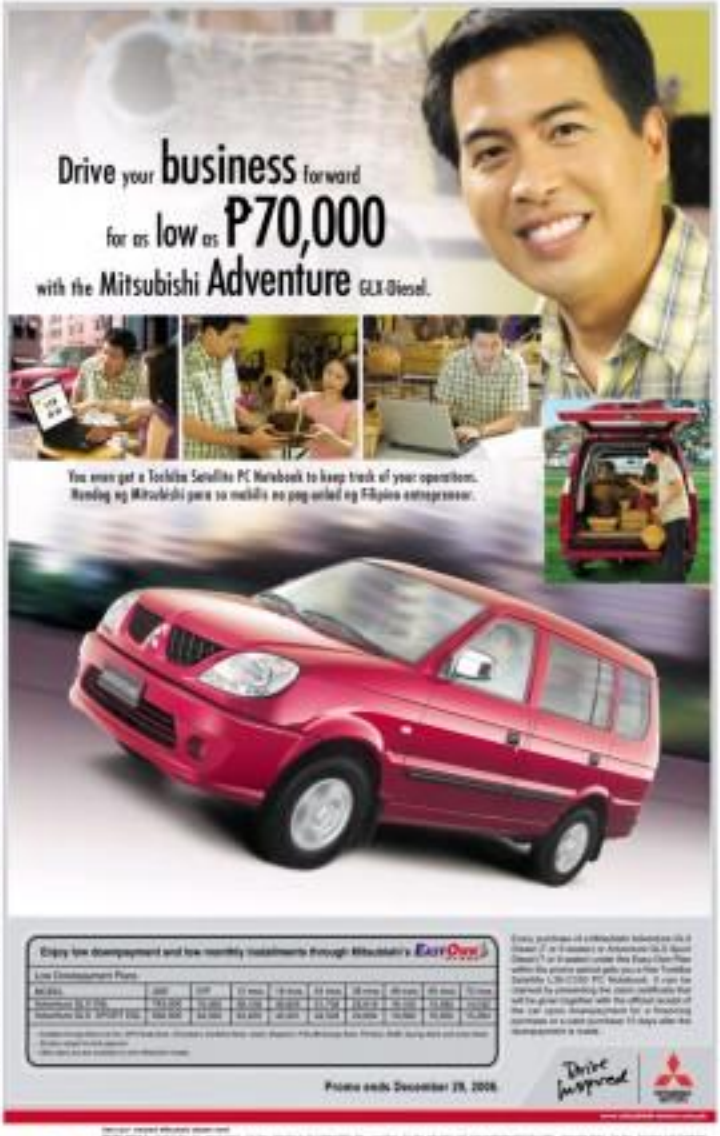
Pagasa said motorists to do list seven southern ballots that Tomas was still expected to enhance monsoons to strong northwesterly windflow over Luzon and would cause moderate to roughseas.

Aside from Metro Manila, other regions that would experience cool winds from the north include northern Luzon, Cagayan Valley and central Luzon.

Observers reported alone when Tomas entered the Philippine area of responsibility as tropical storm.

Weather disturbances that enter the Philippine area of responsibility as a storm are usually reported to intensify as they move over seas.

The last weather disturbances that hit the country, "Seniang," entered the PAR as a storm and developed into a super typhoon. It battered Catanduanes, Aurora, Quezon provinces and Bicol region before it moved out of another super typhoon, "Reming."



3 more Air Force pilots probed for moonlighting

THREE MORE PHILIPPINE AIR Force pilots are under investigation for allegedly moonlighting as commercial airline pilots, the PAF said yesterday.

PAF information officer Maj. Reuben de la Peña said the investigation of the three officers, who all hold the rank of captain, but who were not identified, was in preparation of a possible court-martial.

"The investigation is in the initial stages. It stemmed from moonlighting allegations," de la Peña said.

Just a month ago, Air Force Captains Hilario Pior and Roberto Sulla were ordered discharged by a military court and sentenced to 60-day prison terms each after they were found guilty of moonlighting for commercial airlines.

They were found in violation of Article of War 96 (absence without official leave) and 97 (conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman).

Still another PAF officer, Capt. Carlo Castrillon, is now being court-martialed on similar charges.

A total of 1,086 PAF pilots have so far transferred to higher-paying jobs in commercial airlines.

In 2006 alone, the PAF recorded its highest number of resignations, with 54 officers leaving the service. *Mayen Jaque*

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MEET/GREET/GIFT The Filipina overseas homemakers President Arroyo honored for "Presidential Salubong sa OFW" project awards Rodelyn de Guzman a passenger jeep and other cash prizes at the Malacañang on Tuesday. [illegible]

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'Don't romanticize OFWs to minimize social costs'

[illegible]

and family reasons; they are no more heroes than the construction workers, the jeepney driver, the vendor, the farmer, the factory worker, who daily toil in the Philippines to support self and family," said Ms. Luisa Segovia-Imperial, director of DOLE's Institute for Labor Studies.

"By unduly giving honor to them, unrealistic expectations are generated," she added. "It should be understood that overseas employment is only for the resourceful and unprepared, but provides hope for the wise and ready."

In a paper titled "Overseas Employment As A Development Strategy" delivered on Monday in a conference on migration, Imperial said that the social costs of overseas employment remained "a compelling reason" that keeps the government from promoting it.

The current policy on overseas employment—"managing"—is "doomed passive and reactive" when it could be turned into "full promotion," which is a potent tool for economic growth and development, Imperial said.

The policy shift, she added, may entail more risks and more social costs to where must be "more intensive and extensive information and education campaign to empower workers for wise decisions and make them responsible for their decisions."

"If this has to be acquired enarting at primary school, so be it," the DOLE official added.

Social costs

Imperial noted that overseas employment had its "attendant costs," citing the separation of OFWs from their families for long periods.

"The parental care and guidance denied the children by parents who are supposed to give these result in social maladies that abound [illegible] are recognizable," she said.

Imperial cited welfare cases handled by the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration, Overseas Workers Welfare Administration and nongovernment organizations that directly linked social problems, such as broken marriages, drug addiction, sexual promiscuity, crime, suicide or psychological breakdowns to the long separation between spouses and children.

Harsh cases of abuses, especially those experienced by workers in vulnerable occupations, such as entertainers and domestic helpers, have "destroyed lives of workers and their families," she continued.

Undervalued job categories

The systematic labor organization of women in the economically and socially undervalued job categories of domestics and entertainers has resulted in "serious injustice on the reputation of Filipinos in general, and Filipino women in particular, further damaging their self-worth and morale," Imperial said.

The DOLE official, however, reminded that the possibility that such social problems may be caused by other factors other than overseas employment should not be overlooked.

The notion that the costs far outweigh the benefits, which the workers and family derive from overseas employment, may be true on a case-by-case basis, Imperial said.

She said, however, that it remained to be proven if the incidence of dysfunction among families of OFWs was higher than the average for families with no OFWs.

In the end, the question of which cost is higher—that of overseas employment or that of unemployment and poverty—would be a deciding factor, she added.

VIP treatment

Since the onset of the Christmas season, the government, in recognition of the country's lament to the economic ills OFWs make through their dollar remittances, has been giving VIP treatment to OFW arriving home.

Total remittances totaling [illegible] billion, an all-time high, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas reported on Friday.

Saturday, President Macapagal-Arroyo herself presided over the awarding of cash prizes to OFW arrivals at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport.

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DAHIL SMART TAYO

Noli extends home sales to OFWs

By Cynthia D. Balana

VICE PRESIDENT NOLI DE CASTRO HAS extended the "bargain sale" of government-foreclosed housing units to overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) who are coming home for the holiday season.

The property sale, launched in October, was initially opened to government employees on a 25-percent discount from the Pag-Ibig Fund. Unit buyers get 30 percent off.

De Castro, chair of the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC) and presidential adviser on OFWs, yesterday announced that the program would be expanded to include the OFWs who are coming home for Christmas, or they may be able to visit and inspect the foreclosed houses.

"The housing units are being sold on an as-is, where-is basis. Buyers may avail themselves of a housing loan at an interest rate of 9 percent per annum, with a maximum payment period of 30 years.

Only OFWs who are Pag-Ibig members are qualified for the sale.

"The monthly amortizations on these units are very affordable, given the low interest rates and long payment terms. In some cases the monthly payments might even be lower than what they would be paying if they were renting," De Castro said.

"I know that most of our OFWs dream of buying a house for their families. With this opportunity now would be the best time to make that dream come true," he added.

Aside from Pag-Ibig, the National Home Mortgage Finance Corporation, Home Guaranty Corporation, Home Insurance Guaranty Corporation, Philippine Deposit Insurance Corporation, GSIS and SSS are also participating in the housing sale which will end in April 2007.

The Fund noted it lowered the interest rates on its regular housing loans to enjoy a discount for home packages up to P500,000 and 7 percent to loans over P500,000 upto P600,000. The interest rate has also been decreased to 10.5 percent for loans over P500,000 to P1 million, and 11.5 percent for loans over P1 million up to the maximum of P2 million.

Pag-Ibig has increased its total collections from P26.98 billion in 2000 to P47.38 billion in 2005.

In October, the Pag-Ibig Fund received the Board of Honor Award by the Asian Institute for its accomplishments in providing affordable homes to hundreds of thousands of families.

It also received a bronze medal for its "Tapat na Pag-Ibig" campaign in the 2006 Anvil Awards Advertising awards, a biennial program of the Advertising Board of the Philippines and Advertising Foundation of the Philippines honoring outstanding works that help promote and communicate Filipino values.

Pag-Ibig Fund president Romeo Quimbo said the award "is a welcome bonus for us, on top of attaining our campaign's objective of raising awareness about every member's important role as stakeholder in the Fund."

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Winston F. Garcia
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Clothes passed off as RP-made seized

THE BUREAU OF CUSTOMS YESTERDAY filed complaints of smuggling against an alleged long-term of China-made garments passed off as Philippine-made apparel and a suspected importer of used clothes as shop shop.

The two complaints were filed before the Department of Justice.

In the first case, six people were accused of violating the Tariff and Customs Code of the Philippines for the alleged use of the country as a transshipment point for long China-made textile products to the United States in making it appear that the goods has come from the Philippines.

The United States imposes a quota on China-made apparel.

Named in the complaint were customs brokers Gilbert de Leoner and Limuel Canonizar, Manufacturing Corp. officers Dong Bing Xiang, Maimei Lodia, Raquel Quintilan, Priscilla Tormis and Emelita Ortiz.

According to Customs Commissioner Napoleon Morales, the six were involved in importing a container of fabrics consigned to Limuel at Port of Subic in October. Zella B. Salazaros

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2N Shenzhen / Guilin Yangshuo (Jan 2007)	₱ 199
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4 women charged with faking returns

THE BUREAU OF INTERNAL REVENUE yesterday filed criminal charges against four women for submitting false income tax returns (ITRs) to support their respective loan applications at various banks.

Those charged before the Department of Justice for failure to file returns, pay taxes and supply correct information as required by the National Internal Revenue Code were identified as Jasmin Montero of Bulacan and Mary Ann Bulillo of Bataan, Lenora Quiroz of Manila, and Rita Fabito of Antipolo City. They were also charged with falsification of public documents under the Revised Penal Code.

A revised Circular of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas mandates all bank borrowers and creditors to submit, in addition to the bank's usual requirements, a copy of their latest ITRs duly stamped as received by the BIR.

In addition, they are also required to submit a "waiver of confidentiality of client information" and give the bank authority to verify the authenticity of their documents with the BIR.

BIR investigation showed the respondents had submitted fake ITRs to support their loan applications.

"Through the use of these falsified ITRs, the respondents were able to make it appear that they filed their tax returns with the BIR and that the applicable taxes had been paid although these were none," BIR Commissioner Jose Mario Bocking said.

"Evidently, it is not done to make it appear that the respondents had a stable source of income, and that they applied their loans into approving their loan applications," he added. Cynthia D. Balana

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Gov't hopes share in Marcos firm will bring in billions

Lawyers demand payment for work

By Alison Pupa

A FORMER AIDE of Marcos who claimed to have had the legal brain for the government's recovery of the ill-gotten Marcos/Cojuangco shares in Philippine Telecommunications Investment Corp. (PTIC), which holds a 14-percent stake in telecom giant Philippine Long Distance Telephone Corp. (PLDT), is an optimistic person.

"Of course we are hoping [the bidders] might want to add up their bids since this will be for the good of the nation," said PCGG Commissioner Ricardo Blonde.

Sale of shares

Blonde hailed Monday's decision of the Sandiganbayan antigraft court awarding the government the 111,415 PTIC shares, the equivalent of a 48-percent stake in the company, registered under the name of Prime Holdings Inc., an alleged dummy firm of the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos.

The relief paves the way for the sale of the PTIC shares that were at the center of a four-way battle for ownership among the government and the families of Marcos, Cleofas Puyat Jalandoni and the late former Cojuangco.

The Sandiganbayan's Fourth Division ordered the PTIC's corporate secretary to cancel the shares registered in the name of PHI and issue new certificates in the name of the Republic of the Philippines.

Formal transfer

The antigraft court rejected all petitions of three intervenors and defendants in favor of the government.

PCGG Commissioner Nicasio Conti earlier said the agency would comply with the order for a mere registration of the shares.

Alcuaz said the shares will be formally transferred to the government today until officials of the Department of Finance, PCGG and the PTIC in attendance.

The finance department, which will take custody of the shares, last month started inviting possible buyers of the PTIC shares.

The PCGG earlier said it would sell the shares for between P25 billion and P29 billion.

Highest bid

One of the prospective buyers is the First Pacific Co. of Manuel Pangilinan which already controls majority of PLDT with a 30.5 percent stake. First Pacific also owns 34 percent of PTIC.

The Singapore-based hedge fund Paradise Venture Fund 2000 has put in the highest bid for the government's PTIC shares at P26.2 billion.

The PCGG, the agency tasked with the recovery of ill-gotten Marcos assets, claimed that the PTIC shares formed part of the estate of the late dictator. It said the sequestered shares were ill-gotten and that the Cojuangcos and PHI had acquired the PLDT shares as dummies of Marcos.

Rightful owner

In January, the Supreme Court declared the 111,415 PTIC shares as ill-gotten, and ruled that the government was the rightful owner of the shares.

The case was the result of a suit brought by the PCGG against the Marcos family, the late Ramon Cojuangco and his wife Imelda Cojuangco, and Prime Holdings for the ownership of PLDT.

Biggest stockholder

At the time the case was filed, the PTIC was the biggest stockholder of PLDT, owning 26 percent of the firm.

The Cojuangco family owns the controlling stake in Prime Holdings, making it the single biggest stockholder of PLDT at the time.

The case was a consolidation of five separate petitions between the government, and the Cojuangco and Tuchangco families arising from Sandiganbayan Civil Case No. 1 (inclusive) by the PCGG against Imelda Marcos, her three children and other individuals.

Cross-claim

The estate of Ramon Cojuangco and Imelda Cojuangco claimed to be the rightful owners of 44 percent of PTIC.

In 1986, Imelda Marcos, the widow of the dictator, filed a cross-claim with the Sandiganbayan claiming that she and her late husband owned the 42 percent of PLDT held by the Cojuangco and Tuchangco families and Antonio Oreta.

Ill-gotten wealth

Court records showed that PHI was put up on Oct. 3, 1977, through incorporators Jose D. Campos Jr., Rolando Gapud, Ernesto Lim, Ernesto Abalos and Gervasio Gaviola.

The Supreme Court said that testimony from a number of the firm's former executives, particularly PHI secretary Francisco G. de Guzman, upholds the PCGG's claim that the shares were part of the Marcoses' ill-gotten assets.

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Stories from my hometown after 'Reming'

From page A1

a nearby concert... decades-old trees uprooted, electricity posts toppled, an entire neighborhood wiped out by mud and giant boulders from Mayon's slopes.

My father drives me around to show me the terrible details, the ex. gaseous that did not appear in the news. We tour the city with heavy hearts.

Like a bus terminal

The airport, with its torn roof and broken walls, now resembles a ramshackle bus terminal.

The Yawa River has swelled, its strong, current pulverizing a portion of the Sleeping Dead that rests near the city to Barangay Bigao in Camalig town, shining into a part of the Chinese cemetery, and, incidents say carrying away a number of the tombs.

In Barangay Banog, the pedestrian leading to the Cagsawa Marine and National Park, the town's most venerated ground, has been obliterated. If not for the sign that was spared by the torrents of mud, the site is easy to miss.

Nine, one has to cross several creeks—reconstructed before Reming—on makeshift plywood bridges to get a glimpse of the ruins of the Cagsawa church's belfry.

(By some miracle, what is left of the belfry was left untouched by the typhoon. Again, it was a major milestone to another thousands that residents consider the "worst" after Mayon's eruption on Feb. 1, 1814, which buried the church sitting with some 200 people who sought shelter there from the hardflow.)

The neighborhood surrounding the tourist spot has been flattened. The walls and roofs protruding from a house most of mud and roofs are the only signs to show that there were once life to be seen.

The smell of death still lingers.

Nothing left to destroy

The rain came one to two days after typhoon "Seniang" brushed past Legazpi on the night of Dec. 9.

But Seniang's passage was barely detectable. Reming had wrecked so much there seemed nothing else for Seniang to destroy.

At the city proper businessmen, vendors and office workers take advantage of the sunshine to dry whatever they fished from the chest-deep floodwaters.

Cabinets, swivel chairs, couches and bank documents are laid out on the busy sidewalks, emitting a musty odor. Wet PHP bills hang on a clothesline set up inside a bank.

Down at the satellite market on Tabaco Road, stands are festooned with wet (but still colorful) native bags and souvenirs. The owners are hoping that they can still make a sale when the town dries.

Bank manager Armando Ty talks of losing P2 million worth of property to Reming.

"All our facilities here at the office were 100 percent damaged. Our main office in Manila had to ship new computers so we can continue our transactions," he says at people outside receive a long queue at a functioning automated teller machine.

Ely Antillon, a bank employee, says she is growing weary of doing nothing at the office.

The flood destroyed the office computers, the ATM and other equipment, and the office staff is still waiting for replacements.

Precious ice

Businesses is bad for meat and fish vendors, who have had to limit their trade and cut 20 percent off prices because the precious ice that keeps their stocks fresh is in scarce supply.

On top of everything else, Reming has destroyed the ice plant in Daraga.

"We have to travel as far as Ligao and Iriga City (both in Albay) and Sorsogon to buy ice, which has become too expensive," says meat vendor Dante Sivano.

Some restaurants have partnered with other stores. A high school classmate, who had been running a small concern near St. Agnes' Academy left for Manila a few days after the typhoon to recover from her loss.

Now, many are afraid that incessant rains will bring more landslides in the city and settle in places hit or formed by natural calamities.

Survivor's story

Victoria Bellanca, city mother's mantapes recently lost her life on the job.

This is her story:

On Nov. 10, the day time Reming lashed Legazpi, Bellanca and three other bank employees were at the office as early as 9:30 a.m. to make sure that they were doing "business as usual"—as what their supervisors or bankroll them earlier in the day.

Two hours later, strong winds and heavy rains battered the city. They saw through the office's glass windows that floodwaters were really rushing into the streets, and a number of cars were being carried away by the current.

Fear gripped them when they realized that they could be trapped inside the building.

At 2:20 p.m., the floodwaters entered the bank. Water also started pouring in a steady stream from the second floor of the building.

"This building is very old. We realized that it might cave in," Bellanca recalls.

They decided to leave the chain-deep waters to get home.

It was cold but they silently organized the others, briefly stopping at open areas on higher grounds to rest.

Chilling and weak from hunger, they plunged from their near floating in the waters. "We didn't care if it was dirty or rotten. We were just so hungry," Bellanca says.

She got home after five hours of walking through the waters.

"My children thought I had been killed by the typhoon. I am really happy to be alive," Bellanca says.

Days later, she says, she wrote a letter to the head office complaining about the area office head who had instructed her and her colleagues to report for work on that fateful day.

Signs of hope

Mylene said they, Lazaro, both professors at the Aleo University, despite how they took their three children on an "educational trip" around the city.

"We wanted them to see how harsh nature can be, and make them realize how important it is to take care of our environment," they say.

Gemma Ida, a canteen owner at the airport, says that even if she has lost everything, starting from scratch, the spirit of sharing has never been more evident.

A BRIDGE TOO FAR OUT: Railroad tracks twist all the way down to the river in Barangay Travesia, Guinobatan, Albay, after "Reming's" fury early month whipped up a coalition that washed away the bridge's concrete foundation.

In Lezach he there simple s of hope before leaving my h town.

And I discover many:

- Two boys helping each o carry a ladder for one in mem their washed away hou
- Linemen pulled from n the country working overtime t more light in the city in time Christmas.
- A priest leaving the dar late before dawn to deliver pa and awakening a search-a-rescue the radio.

Christmas may be gloomy you in Legazpi, but the ne spirit is alive, well and burnin the heart.

Health Advisory

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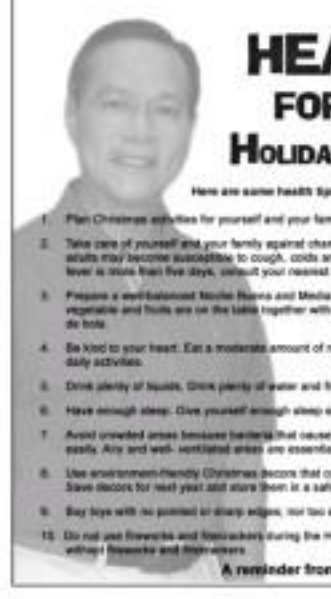


HEALTH FOR THE HOLIDAY SEASON

Here are some health tips for the Christmas Season:

1. Plan Christmas activities for yourself and your family to prevent tension and stress.
2. Take care of yourself and your family against changes in temperatures. Children and adults may become susceptible to cough, colds and fever. If your cough, colds and fever is more than five days, consult your nearest health station.
3. Prepare a well-balanced Noche Buena and Media Noche meals. Make sure that vegetable and fruits are on the table together with your traditional ham and queso de bola.
4. Be kind to your heart. Eat a moderate amount of nutritious foods to sustain your daily activities.
5. Drink plenty of liquids. Drink plenty of water and fruit juices to facilitate excretion.
6. Have enough sleep. Give yourself enough sleep so that the mind and body can rest.
7. Avoid crowded areas because bacteria that cause diseases multiply and spread easily. Airy and well- ventilated areas are essential to healthy living.
8. Use environment-friendly Christmas decors that cost less and are not fire hazards. Save decors for next year and store them in a safe place.
9. Buy toys with no pointed or sharp edges, nor too small toys that can cause choking.
10. Do not use fireworks and firecrackers during the holidays. Make some noise even without fireworks and firecrackers.

A reminder from DOH Secretary Duque

Ex-soldier questioned over lawmaker's slay

From page A1

House would raise a P1.2-mil. fees fund for information leading to the arrest and prosecution of those behind Benitez's assassination.

"We will take decisive actions and bring to justice the perpetrators of this barbaric act against our friend who is very humble, a man of simplicity and wisdom and admired and loved by his people in Abra," De Venecia said.

"I say to the people of Abra, let us not see end to the infighting. We don't want Abra to be like Sicily, with its endless vendetta killings," he said.

'Like Sicily'

In Bangued, Abra, a lone gunman opened fire at the house of Mayor Albert Sereno of Dolores noon at 12:35 a.m. yesterday but no one was hurt, police said. Seven lone guns of the house were doused with gasoline.

Police Insp. George Ludia said the incident in Bangued was not related to the killing of Benitez, 62, and his bodyguard SPO1 Adolfo Ortega as Saturday inside the compound of Mr. Carmel Church in Quezon City after the congressman stood as sponsor at the wedding of his niece.

At least 27 shotguns are also residents of Bangued and three had been attacks on their houses recently. He said that police have set up checkpoints in Abra, where NPA guerrillas are active.

Because of the volatile politics in Abra, police investigators in Manila were not discounting this as a motive in the attack on Benitez.

Communist tit-for-tat

Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez said the Department of Justice (DOJ) is also looking into the possibility of a communist plot because they are targeting high-profile political figures and allies of the President ... but it could be extortionist also," Gonzalez said.

He made the statement when asked to comment on Benitez's murder, the reported death threats against House Majority Leader Prospero Pichay and Davao and Pasig Rep. Robert Jaworski Jr. escaping a bomb attack that blew up his car.

Asked in a telephone interview with the Inquirer whether the killings could be the New People's Army's tit-for-tat for the reported murder of killings of communist leaders, Gonzalez replied: "It's possible."

Gonzalez said that Jose Ma. Sison, founding chair of the Communist Party of the Philippines who lives in exile in the Netherlands, had "been declared an alleged case against the government."

Part of destabilization plot

Although the CPP-NPA could not be the sole party behind the killing of politicians, Gonzalez said they were all part of the picture and the purpose was to destabilize President Macapagal-Arroyo's administration.

"With these killings, people will be dissatisfied over the inability of the government to protect them ... the stability of the country is held to doubt, not only here but abroad," Gonzalez said.

Nonetheless, the justice secretary admitted that government probers have no concrete evidence yet to pin down the killers.

"No concrete evidence yet, this is one angle that we are looking into," he said. "Right now it is premature yet, saying fact that all these killings the stated are high-profile political personalities. We have to look into every angle," Gonzalez stressed.

February coup

Gonzalez recalled that CPP-NPA had conspired with Makabayan Koalisyon ng Pilipino (MKP) in an attempt to oust the Arroyo administration in February 2006. He said this included the bombing of Honorable Expressways.

Ex-Davao City Mayor Rodrigo Duterte said the reported plot by all brigades had nothing to do with politics and declined elaborate further although he said that the rumors of some military had wanted to enforce in the metropolis.

"Kapag sa politics, politically significant to us. We say kung external lips an issues that believe were anti-people but will never go down to this level, gamitan," Ated Casilan, deputy general of the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (Bayan) in Southern Mindanao, said.

The National Bureau of Investigation has said that an unidentified "Negrense" life was in hiding on place at a Christmas party in Davao City. Cabinet, Inquirer reporters Jhoni Bollozos, Inquirer Visayas Bureau, Rainier Allan and Joseph Bolasco, Inquirer Mindanao

Congress urged to pass bill on renewable energy

SOMETIMES IN THE DOME, AND SOON, IF we are to trust most globetrotting environmentalists, it's cold outside.

Our lawmakers need to take immediate protective action to prevent more damaging consequences from super typhoons, says WWF-Philippines, the global conservation organization.

"Hundreds have died. Thousands have lost their homes. The damage to infrastructure and businesses will run into the billions. The level of economic calamities is massive and continuing. All this came from one typhoon," points out WWF CEO Lorenzo Tan, referring to Supertyphoon "Reming" that recently ravaged the country.

Philippine Atmospheric, Geographical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) data showed an alarming increase in typhoon strength over the last few years. Between 2001 and 2006, the Philippines was battered by seven (eight typhoons and six storms per year.

Interaction between hot, cold

"What is happening? Simply put, the interaction between hot and cold temperatures alternate weather patterns. As the planet runs hot warms, the violence of this interaction is increasing as well," Tan explained.

Increasing levels of greenhouse gases, of which carbon dioxide is the main culprit, expose the hot-versus-cold interaction rise in global temperatures, he said.

"The burning of fossil fuels, primarily oil and coal, for energy or transport are the main sources of carbon dioxide. As the economies of the world continue to expand, so do their outputs of carbon dioxide. It is the main reason why weather patterns that plague our world," says Tan.

WWF-Philippines has called for a proactive and strategic solution that would effectively deal with the rising temperatures caused by increasing carbon dioxide levels in the environment.

"The Renewable Energy Bill must be passed," stressed Tan.

"Reformed appropriate solutions that contribute to climate and other environmental problems should be identified, promoted, widely disseminated and encouraged."

The Renewable Energy Bill, which is currently up for approval by the Senate, seeks to increase the use of clean renewable sources of energy—such as geothermal, wind, hydro and biomass—by offering fiscal incentives to new power projects.

Among these incentives are waiver/VAT zoning for renewable energy projects, tax-free importation of renewable energy machinery, open access to the energy grid for all renewable energy sources, and priority dispatch for wind, power and other intermittent sources of energy.

The bill also provides payment for the renewable (hydro) is mandated that a fixed percentage of generated power comes from renewable energy sources.

Aside from avoiding climate change, the Renewable Energy Bill would also have a positive socioeconomic impact on the Philippines.

Savings of $2.9B

According to a University of the Philippines Solar Laboratory study commissioned by AWWF, the country could save as much as $2.9 billion from unnecessary fuel imports if it switched to renewable indigenous energy sources.

"For years, people have thought of the country's poor options not against the backdrop of foreign debt as they hamstrung developing nations. The 33 million Filipinos who survive on less than $2 a day have lived with this all their lives," says Tan.

"Global warming is arguably caused but many reasons more difficult to address. Much of it is climate debt that the industrialized nations have to current account behalf over the last century."

"Whatever it is blame, the challenge can no longer be ignored. We are all going to have to pay [for], sooner or later, because warm is indicates that we are still manage global climate," he stressed.

Christmas lights blinking again . . .

From page A1

it maintains fines at 95.4 million.

The damage to transmission structures during typhoon power supply to electric cooperatives in Leyte and Samar, in the Western Visayas Electric Co. and the Specialist Poly Manufacturing Inc. and to Transco customers in Bicol, Leyte.

The typhoon also affected Transco's transmission lines in Bicol, Northern Samar and Eastern Samar.

Legaspina said the Leyte-Bohol 138kV transmission line and the Leyte-Cebu 230kV transmission line were hardly affected by the typhoon.

But the condition of one tower of the Leyte-Cebu 230 kV lines was revealed because of flooding in Barangay Tagbong, Amantay, Leyte.

Leyte-Luzon transmission lines

The Leyte-Luzon 350kV transmission lines has twelve electricity since flooding hit the Visayas.

Legaspina said Southern Luzon are not yet ready to receive power from Transco's Ormoc Leyte-to-Southern Luzon City.

In a press conference in Daraga, Albay, Gallardo Batchildon, Transco vice president for Luzon operations and maintenance, said Albay and Sorsogon would be completed by Dec. 21, if the latest.

The original target was Dec. 16.

Batchildon said the delay was caused by bad weather that hampered rehabilitation work in Albay. He blamed the typhoons of the power transmission.

Restoration work is going on in Southern Luzon now and will connect the Naga-Sorsogon lines, according to Batchildon.

Power lines of Albay Electric Cooperative are now 87 percent restored to connection areas and 47 percent in residential areas, according to Allen Bedoya, general manager of the cooperative.

He said Legazpi City and the Albay district would be energized as soon as Transco provided the "feed" for the co-op's substations.

Bedoya, however, said that he could not say when power would be restored to the Camarines Sur. The Sur Sorsogon-Multipot area might be energized before Christmas Day.

Sorsogon Electric Cooperative said it was 100 percent ready to energize its service area, while Sorsogon II Electric Cooperative said only 46 percent of its member-consumers could expect power restoration.

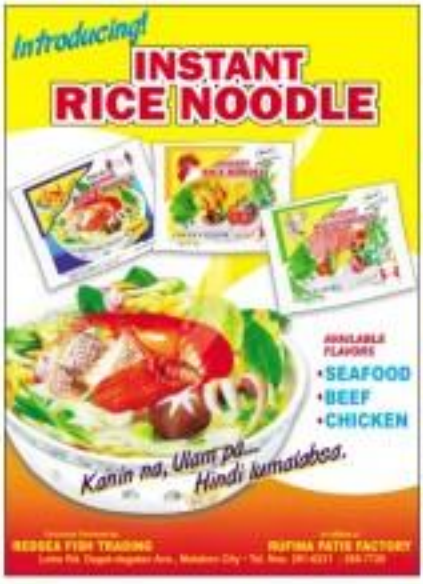
Staggered basis

Based on an updated damage report, Batchildon said a total of 1,148 towers and more than 2,600 poles were destroyed by Reming.

He said it would cost Transco P91 million for the temporary restoration work and an other P900 million for the permanent rehabilitation of the damaged facilities.

Asked about a report that consumers would be charged the cost of the restoration work, Batchildon said this came from the Energy Regulatory Commission.

"If ever the restoration work are to be collected from consumers, it would be on a staggered basis, he said.



PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

OPINION

Cha-cha, again

THE PROBLEM WITH CLERICS IS, THEY ARE HELD to a higher standard of truth and accountability than any politician will ever enjoy, much less meet. So when the spokesman of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines spoke about gathering half a million Filipinos for last Sunday's rally at the Rizal Park and a much lower number showed up, one priest's reputation became a whole event's epitaph.

EDITORIAL Had the CBCP not raised expectations, the turnout would have been categorized favorably with the number who came for the Church-led rally to November 2000 that marked the beginning of the end of the presidency of Joseph Estrada—a rally, incidentally, at which then Vice President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo spoke. She believed in people power then, even when Estrada would later produce a far larger crowd at Rizal Park. But Estrada only had one rally, and there against him had rallies in the Edsa Shrine and would return to it again in 2001.

Fair criticism has been raised at the CBCP not only for its hyperbole concerning attendance, but also on the basis of its appearing rather timid and confused concerning the purpose of the rally itself. More than what it was against, what was the rally actually for? The outrage over the House of Representatives' hasty-fixed effort to pursue Charter change that inspired the bishops to finally speak up also inspired a convincing skepticism over government's sincerity in backing out of Charter change. And yet the bishops said the time had come for thanksgiving. But for what?

For nothing, as it turns out. Yesterday, the President accomplished the latest turnaround in a political career already remarkable for frequent somersaults. While she distanced herself from her allies on Dec. 14, saying the economy should come first, yesterday she said that instead of waiting for the people "to find the proper time and opportunity," she and her allies would do it for the people. Charter change, she suddenly recalled, "is a platform consistent with some of the administrations that will be pursued with urgency and fervor."

Such urgency and fervor for Charter change weren't there a week ago, because the urgent task at hand was to execute on public demonstrations of fervor would take place. The wind was taken out of the sails of an alarmed citizenry by the administration's declaration that Charter change was dead—for now. Appeals were made to the bishops not to go ahead, and when they said they would, their venue for the original rally date—Friday—was taken away. Then the government speculated about terrorist threats to scare away rallyists. Parents were warned that the lives of their children could be at risk if they allowed them to attend the rally. The same government officials who had dismissed warnings about terrorism stalking the Asean summit meeting in Cebu took the lead in warning about the dangers of going to Rizal Park.

Military men and civilian workers in government were reminded that being seen at the rally would have administrative consequences. Troops were called in from outside Metro Manila. The police were placed on red alert. Some bishops were disinclined by officials, who told the parishes were involved in plotting rebellion, that there were secret tunnels and giant vaults of cash. And finally, the Red menace was trotted out.

This assault on the senses made the CBCP punch-drunk. It staggered on, heading off the threat that began prior to the rally and which continues to this day. The congressmen who were whipped last week and are striking back today, those who marveled at the backlash yesterday and are now the first or problem the rally is non-event—all are part of the same effort. And that effort, as the President made clear yesterday, is to ensure what she had told sons off the table just last week: Charter change, on the administration's terms in conformity with its own wishes.

We can only conclude that the House and Palace's seeming remorse last week was feigned. They had stopped the political and even spiritual momentum that seemed there to death over the past two weeks. The satisfaction they expressed immediately after Sunday's rally should be understood in terms of contentment over how their manipulation of the situation succeeded.

Last week, the House threatened on the height of July 4th (did not expect it or the President to fall prey to their delusions so quickly and so shamelessly. They set poised to repeat the error, mistaking a temporary reduction in tensions as victory and a license to do what they want.

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How much in taxes did RP's richest pay?

"THEY KILLED THE WRONG CONGRESSMAN"

I heard this exclamation while passing the corner coffee shop. A group of men were discussing the assassination of then Rep. Luis Bersamin Jr. in Quezon City the other day.

"You see to it, Boyong. Whatever his sins who deserve to say goodbye to this world," the man continued. "Not Bersamin. Whoever his sins were to the mastermind in the killing cannot be any worse than the sins of the administration congressmen who tried to rape our Constitution and the people by railroading that Con-ass resolution through the House."

Naturally, that provoked this question: Who are those congressmen you are referring to?

"You can take your pick," he replied. "There are so many of them, it would be a waste of bullets to shoot all of them."

The man hastened to add: "I am not suggesting at all that anyone of them be shot. Killing is too good for them. They should live and suffer the consequences of their misdeeds."

That led to a round of joking and discussing about of human frailty of whom I will elaborate here, you make a game of guessing who they are until somebody will joking, throw the question: "If you were given the power to name 10 persons to face the firing squad, whom would you choose?" (Remember, those men were only joking.)

Names were thrown around, accompanied by colorful exclamations, until the man who asked that question said, "Let's take a poll. Each one will list down 10 names, then we will count the names of those most mentioned and make a list." I decided that the exercise was a waste of paper, but because I was by drinking pals, after a few minutes, he said, "All right, just give us yours."

He gathered all the ballots, counted the names most often mentioned, and ranked those by the number of votes they got. Then asked me to see the finalists, wouldn't you? Of course, you would, and so did I.

As I moved over and looked over their shoulders to peek at the list, I wasn't expect the names

JOSE MEDINA, FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE University of the Philippines and chair of the Constitutional Commission that was pushing for a new charter, has an interesting theory about why Cha-cha failed, I failed, he said, because GMA is not unpopular. "Many people would rather focus on personalities. The President has 40 percent unpopularity and she is the symbol of Charter change."

I buy the part about GMA's unpopularity but I beg to disagree with my friend about this being a reflection of people thinking personality rather than substance. Most Filipinos rejected Cha-cha not because of personality but because of substance. That substance is credibility. It was the lack of credibility of the people espousing Cha-cha and not simply GMA's lack of popularity that doomed it.

Credibility is substance, not form. Who is standing for something matters as much as, if not more than, what he is standing for. It must be said that Ferdinand Marcos assumed a combined presidential and parliamentary form of government that would have him as president and prime minister at the same time. It matters that 1986 and Jose de Venecia want a parliamentary system that still rather allow GMA to rule forever or De Venecia to finally achieve his dream of occupying Malacañang, a thing he will never get from presidential elections, whichever system they're in.

The principle is simple: The devil himself may quote Scripture to suit his purposes. You hear the devil doing that, forget Scripture and start running like hell. Or bringing out your crosses.

I have another theory about why Cha-cha failed, and that is that it finally crossed the Filipinos' threshold of forbearance. That was what drove them to bring out their crosses when they heard the devil quoting Scripture. Indeed, that was what drove the bishops quite literally to the streets. It was a disastrous error at least in her 1st prayer.

I am not being facetious at all when I thank the congressmen for removing this nation's capacity for outrage, distract single-handedly, they did what the opposition, the Church, civil society, business, media and the state bureaucracy had not been able to do for a long time, almost overnight, they rallied and mobilized the people—against them.

Ironically, the congressmen fell into the very trap they had been unwilling unknowingly. That was getting the public images of indefensible greed and arrogance. That happened to Joseph Estrada during the impeachment trial. That impeachment trial had turned image from hero into fool. That was the reason the congress had killed the impeachment bids against GMA; the world never have survived them, and they were going with her. The images that would flash on TV in a continuous would be more than the public would bear. They would have reminded one like a great flood to drown the nation of its dregs.

Yet the congressmen allowed the same fate in their "deliberations" on Cha-cha, the word "deliberations" having in quotation marks because the only thing in congress it was their deliberations effort to screw the public. More than the killing of the impeachment bids against GMA, the low governors railroading of the Cha-cha against reason, against opposition, and against every shred of decency, unleashed a spectacle of a gang rape—literally and visceral. So totally unsavory as readily lost in the evidences of ambition, they would never see or hear or smell or taste or feel the stupe seeking around them.

I remember that a friend of mine objected to identify even the long used use of the word "bobo" in an editorial. As far as he can recall his classical education, he said, "bobos" presumed only to single persons. It took heroic courage to fall into habits, which was overcoming pride that went and almost toppled a child. In the prayer rally at the Rizal Park only last Sunday against the Cimex, Cha-cha and the abuses of the administration congressmen.

They are all proof that the Filipino may appear meek, docile and patient at first, but underneath this is a deep well of anger and anger at all the abuses that he is made to suffer, that now and then this volcano will erupt and bury its abusers.

Last Sunday's prayer rally was just a warning, a slight tremor. The next one may not be so slight.

* * *

So we have a number of billionaires and multibillionaires—but by Henry Sy, Lucio Tan, Jaime Zobel de Ayala and Enrique Zobel de Ayala—as listed by Forbes Magazine to its latest Asian edition. The Philippines' richest all have a combined net worth of $16 billion (that's billions in American dollars). Forbes listed the net worth of each of them, the richest being Sy with $4 billion.

Now, wouldn't it be interesting if the finances of Internal Revenue would release, in the name of transparency, its own list detailing how much each of these paid in personal income taxes (not corporate income tax)? Are their personal income taxes proportional to their wealth and income? Or already know the wealth of each of them, he'll find out how much in taxes each of them paid.

I know that it is against the law for the BIR to make public the personal income tax paid without the permission of the taxpayer. But if the taxpayer paid the correct taxes, I don't think he will have any reason not to give his permission. You try to hide it only when you know there is something to be ashamed of, such as when the amount paid is less than honest.

Wouldn't it encourage Filipinos to pay their correct taxes if they see that the nation's wealthiest are also paying the highest taxes?

* * *

There will be no Kapihan sa Sheraton for the next two Mondays, Christmas Day and New Year's Day. The next one will be on Jan. 8, 2007.

As I See It

Neal H. Cruz

here, sorry all I can say is that there were no exceptions. They are names you probably would rather not know yourself.

The next question would be: How many men and how many women were there in the list?

Answer: Mostly men; there were only two women, one of whom was consistently at or near the top.

Next question: Were the reasons why you included each name in your list?

One by one, they gave their reasons, and again there were no surprises. The most common reason was the worst: Cons are railroad defended by the collective smart of the public. Next reason was the repeated lying by the candidates for the position.

"They can't even be well," quipped one man. "Their lies are so obvious and so transparent."

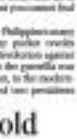
Still another reason is graft and corruption, with the pork barrel system as the most hated.

What lesson can be gathered from this little game in giving of facts in little time? Not only is the del player? That one public officials—especially those on the list—never watch out. Like Santa Claus, people are making mental lists. Our votes, often decided at the "ballot" count who are made by fooled and bribed, are not that important and inconvent. This appear to us true today as when it was written decades ago: "You can fool some of the people all the time, and all of the people some of the time, but you cannot fool all the people all of the time."

The first time power in the Philippines came into the hands of the people was when the revolution that culminated in the 1896 Revolution against Spain and the United States, in the guerrilla war during the Japanese Occupation, in the modern-day people power that toppled two presidents

Threshold

THERE'S THE RUB



Conrado de Quiros

and almost toppled a third. In the prayer rally at the Rizal Park only last Sunday against the Cimex, Cha-cha and the abuses of the administration congressmen.

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Cancer with a decoy

HIGH BLOOD

Ernesto P. Nuñez, M.D.

WHO also like to know the concerns of the discriminating one. Here, what makes their blood pressure rise or makes them sick, without that all's well with their world and with themselves. —Ed.

of deciding to accept chemotherapy.

It helps tests pulling in the entire direction but leave vanishing out one. Maybe that is good because a diagnosis responsibility and gets feelings still to internalized. I have had to contribute to needle feelings with silence.

"Hi My Attending Doctor."

"Please be reposted chair, of all people, I must be well aware of your track record. Its, if I repeat left want in your professional skill, integrity, sensitivity, compassion and judgment, he assured that it is not without any basis.

"So, I stated before, this family does not engage in the 'denial' game. Your decisions are my decisions. I know only too well how difficult my case is and I am not about to make it more difficult. Please feel free to consult other doctors.

"Only a few things I ask:

"(1) Always consider risk/benefit, therapeutic benefit and cost benefit in mind. The cost, to time and discomfort of treatment can in fact, wracking and have breaking. There is a place for late-stage treatment but, see it is a only of little help and no better than well considered minimal judgment, palliative measures, sometimes more futile, and require painful procedures.

"(2) Consider non-aggressive, less painful, less risky alternatives.

"(3) Having discomfort is paramount, aware of the principle of double-effect, that if the best present promises necessary value, but will ease discomfort, go for it.

"(4) Do not for the treatment of disease to incur grievous than the suffering of the same.

"(5) Minimize, if not eliminate, academics.

"(6) Love one another as I have loved you."

I have worked with many of them, when they were terminally ill patients. I had practiced the most physical care in my life but brought out the best in them. My medical partner unanimously endorsed to make the best even better. My cancer specialist interrupted his stay in Manila to fly back to Honolulu personally administer my first of chemotherapy. He must realize that I stood at side and make me happy that I have lived with of sharing with others, of passing on the good.

I was done with chemotherapy on July 21. However, a reexamination of the urinary bladder in early October revealed recurrence. This time I declined to accept another form of chemotherapy which was still in the trial stage.

Now past 76 years, something like this is "par for the course." Working hours by mind short although for God to be fighter.

Be prepared for the worst, wish as advance directive or a living will advised where my caregivers what not to do when I can no longer take part in the decision making. I think everyone should have one. The call home from the Supreme to their families, their friends or all—saying or not sick or poor, beautiful or not so beautiful, clean or not so clean are created just the same, and the unprepared are the most shocked and lost, most like being caught in a big fire without the benefit of prior drill.

"If you have it, flaunt it." This may seem more like a boring title, but maybe there are lessons to learn from the experience.

Ernesto P. Nuñez, 76, is a cardiologist

Media and decorum

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

A FRIEND ONCE REMARKED that if the season the Hollywood luminaries called off their orgy of a high-end Malibu hotel area that they had gotten ahead of reading with the Philippine media.

If you remember, one of the excuses cooked up on was as cited by the ambushed-on media were ing the news, especially the photographers and TV camera men, that to invade his gas and threatened to fire it if the news people didn't behave themselves.

Journalists have never been the decorous sort, and in fact take pride in being unsung; the best seen by the hobbled fists invades.

It's ironic, therefore, that those days the media are under attack for not behaving with decorum—like played during a press conference called by House Speaker Jose de Venecia and his henchmen. The tantrum produced such compelling video footage is fortunately to swamp the unsanctioned acquisitions that the House leadership had [sic] to suppress.

Even in the hypocrisy, it has led to an examination of journalistic values and behavior and, I heard, even an investigation into the slander allegations of impropriety.

This is welcome, since the hullabaloo raised by a certain Senate Committee which he stood up in the midst of the press conference and began denouncing what Dr. Wilson and Co. had done during their hits and telling their names. This introduced the media to the phenomenon called "trial by publicity," in which the media become the tools for demanding that Committee "inspect our representatives."

But the most dramatic part of the tantrum took place outside the function room as Committee were being herded out, even as he continued loudly denouncing the media for their "unethical" behavior, getting him.

This was where reporters from the business columnists like Agaan Jaymalin to Committee and I know a handful of some at the mischief—were translating that such a "box-headed" indicated needed some straightening.

Rina Jimenez-David is editor in chief of PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER.

Gifts

LOOKING BACK

Ambeth R. Ocampo

WHEN I LOOK AT ALL THE BOOKS I SUBSCRIBED to, my being under my Christmas tree, I'm happy to know that I have not received a single book this Christmas. Either my circle of thoughtful friends has become smaller, or they have become more creative with regard to gifts, or people are starting to realize what I have been saying all along: there are only eight book titles in existence as one can store and read in a lifetime. Anything else is overkill. Of the eight pieces being touched, I keep telling friends who receive a book cake to carve their initials on the bottom, scrape it, recycle it and return the cleaned-before it comes back.

Thinking of other Christmas gifts like this year, I opted not to take the easy way out by buying wine, salami, candies or condoms. I wanted to give pieces away, but didn't know what to choose. A pair of goldfish in a bowl was a thought, but rather difficult to deliver. A good gift would be a large jar of Spanish or Italian olive oil, but I've never enjoyed and every actually like the last time I gave these away, it ended up in a bottle.

This year, I settled on spending again time, which was expensive and troublesome for the rest of the gift-monger. I stayed in years ago. I just hope the recipients will appreciate it. Christmas shopping is really a chore and I wish I had the store's organization and foresight—the boys the gifts members of the Christmas Season—but I think I'm just spoiled by the system.

Christmas shopping is like writing this column: the only inspiration is the deadline. Actually seems to ask what I would want for Christmas for but that I would tell the truth and ask for a thing. Last year, I asked for a copy of the book of Fr. Bernardo Tobel, a manuscript page edited one of Carmen Guerrero Nakpil's or Celia Cordero Fernandez's autobiography, an American, probably vintage sculpture by Napoleon Rivera, an undergarment, they said, was a "necessary" institution, a sense for sharing and trading information.

Excuse me, how I been part of a different institution all these decades? When did the media community turn into a club of looks only others? When did we begin rubber-stamp rules of right conduct and proper behavior?

Press conferences have always been messy affairs. They're not private parties, although sometimes certainly pays for the food and the venue. And there's nothing better than shut us up—we're naturally and talking things up, cultivating an otherwise boring affair, and making for good copy and lively footage.

Commissions may, sometimes? Where did we ever bother to check each other's credentials at the door? Especially those days when any bloggers can claim an audience, anybody can become part of the media community. And we in the media, who depend precisely on openness and access and freedom of expression for our survival, are now to become business enslaving people from press conferences or seeking in others's them.

All a consequence of the worst throwing fits, figured but most unguided by a media who are beyond the behavior unbecoming a citizen of this paper.

I haven't prior to the process by which this has been was made, but I am happy some action was taken. I was rather embarrassed, watching the exciting footage, having part of the same papers as reporting, especially when he accused me of bias and even greed, about his rather humble mere grocer, dismissing Cherie Gil in full on media mode, as loud.

My one reservation about against lockdown on reporters and dismay is I wouldn't have to get involved; if anyone had the right to throw a glass of water in Commission, it would have been De Venecia or any one of the congressmen present. They had, after all, been insulted in public. What had Cherie been against Commission, who has survived a brush by year and yet continues to lend his name to many causes? was he offended by the lack of decorum shown by the son of one of the country's historical personalities? Perhaps, but I don't see much sense that congressmen who harmed the people in the public safety that institutional right when he switches to this up because they were too sensitive of Congress? Talk about bad manners!

But the interview was quite ignoble, I must say, have had a chilling effect on [sic] DOJOSH columnists not on all journalists working for responsible newspapers and broadcast entities. I will certainly think twice, or more, before taking a glass of water in hand during a public affair, or generally during press conferences. Who knows what might be said?

* * *

Dr HEH book "Huddlewars as an Orgy," Nora Ephron (nora a successful movie director) established that she decided to stop writing her columns on the media for a magazine. It's bad news, she said, when media people begin making news instead of covering them.

Hindi, na media professionals should keep on the background, covering while the politicians and causing controversy the proverbial "wallflowers at an orgy." Because when we begin projecting ourselves into the picture, becoming part of the story we are covering, we not only lose our objectivity but also our focus and media purpose.

It's certainly difficult to resist the blandishments of media notoriety-hood. It's quite an ego massage to be recognized by strangers and even approached for autographs. But when the adulation becomes the goal and not just the perk, that it's time to ask ourselves why we are in this profession at all.

If politics is closer his for ugly people, then journalism should be shun his for people who need validation to function.

'Lagay'

CAN CORRUPTION BE MEASURED?

Statistically, we can't expect corruption to be surveyed like the Gross National Product, which people going around trying to get the total peso or dollar value of broken deals and so. Transparency International, a group based in Germany, uses the term bribe taking, which are perceptions. In how issues survey is the Corruption Perceptions Index, which brings together

PINOY KASI

Michael L. Tan

on ratings mainly from experts and business people. The index is released with a ranking of countries.

Less and lessons is The Global Corruption Barometer which looks more on how corruption affects ordinary people. The 2006 Barometer is particularly interesting because it probes into what TI calls "petty bribery": How often does the common tao pay bribes, and to whom, to activities. It asked how citizens perceive their government's anti-corruption efforts.

The latest TI results were released on Dec. 5. One figure worth sharing: 31 percent of Filipinos surveyed felt that the government's fight against corruption was "not effective." That's the good news. Another 23 percent said the government did not fight corruption, but actually encouraged it.

Curious about other findings, I went into the TI website (www.ti.de), downloaded the reports and thought I'd share some additional insights I gained by looking at the Barometer.

Sectors

Before going into the Barometer itself, let me talk a bit more about the Corruption Perceptions Index or CPI. The CPI is useful because of the way it ranks countries in the world, like the rankings haven't been changing too dramatically over the years. What matters more to me is not so much if we're frozen in those rankings, dormant forever to remain corrupt. It seems almost like some kind of self-fulfilling prophecy, where fathers tell their sons, the fashion people and father-inlaws friends and begin to believe that Filipinos, together with the Indonesians and Vietnamese, are "by nature" the most corrupt people.

The Barometer is more useful in the way it actually surveys men and women on the street, picking into how corruption affects their daily lives. The one limitation the Barometer has is that they could not include countries like China and Vietnam, where ordinary citizens may be less willing to participate in a survey than those in other more likely states of governments. (Those two countries are included in the Corruption Perceptions Index since capitalist business people can operate.)

How widespread then is bribe-paying? The TI survey asked people, "In the past 12 months, have you or anyone living in your household paid a bribe in any form?" Globally, the "yes" response was about 9 percent, ranging from a low of 1 percent for Singapore to 60 percent in Morocco. In the Asia Pacific region, the average was 7 percent. The highest bribe-paying figures in the region came from Pakistan (15 percent), the Philippines (16 percent) and Indonesia (19 percent).

TI also asked people to rate corruption in various sectors and institutions, from a 1 ("not at all corrupt") to 5 ("extremely corrupt"). Here's how Filipinos ranked the sectors and how, I'm going to name them from least to most corrupt: religious leaders (2.1), media (2.4), NGOs (2.6), medical services (2.6), parliament (2.9), educational (3.0), military (3.2), private sector (3.2), legal system/judiciary (3.4), the military (3.4), tax services (3.7), political parties (3.8), parliament/legislature (3.9), police (3.9).

The findings came very close to my (un)expectations, with some clearing for the low corruption ratings given to the media, legal system (3.2), educational (3.0), religious institutions (2.1), medical services (2.6), majority perception systems (3.2), legal system/judiciary (3.4), the military (3.4), tax services (3.7), political parties (3.8), parliament/legislature (3.9), police (3.9).

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On the other hand, we do suffer in the areas of business and private, the courts, the lawmakers and the law enforcers, which it just shows corruption. We may shrug our shoulders about the way the police, for example, always seem to appear from nowhere during parties, we're talking here about many lives being put at risk. Think, too, of the people behind the shreds of trucks and buses, with a license, yes, but never having been trained on driving skills or knowledge of traffic rules.

Asking why

The Barometer should get us thinking not just about the nature of corruption but, even more importantly, why we have corruption. We have reasons like "lack of values" and "low government salaries," with exhortations to pray more and increase government salaries.

The Barometer helps us delve into some of these reasons. We are horrified, in the pattern and frequency of bribes, and how it weighs in terms of its corruption abuse. For Juan and Juana de la Cruz, just filling out a government form can be time intimidating. The solution? Here look for friends or neighbors of relatives or relatives working in City Hall to help out. And if they don't know anyone, then look for the fixers.

Bureaucracies and bureaucratic procedures lend into corruption in many ways. Even the refinement of the procedures, for a civil servant, can lead to corruption, with the way a system like the Philippines' is set up. Let's take the case of up and day-out. Eventually they end up exhausted, and develop a sense of entitlement for little gifts (especially around Christmas), which grows to no doubt the bureaucratic kudos.

I'm hoping some of my anthropology graduate students will eventually look into the economy of lagay. I wonder as versus if Filipinos have more lagay with bribes, which is why some academics will need to differentiate or well into other terms such as "pang-merienda," "pamasahe" (transportation) and "pang-ayos dyan [to]." I wouldn't dismiss them totally as euphemisms for bribes; they also carry a sense of entitlement and reciprocity on the part of the bribee and the bribe-taker. The relationship that exists between that gives rise to rewards, gifts and bribes, which is why the Civil Service Commission has to warn government people every Christmas not to even say "Merry Christmas," "tree dan for inducement or to solicit favors.

I get unexpected with explanations for corruption like "lack of values" and "low salaries" because they're too broad, too standardized traditional values. For example, it's "family values" that force civil servants to help out a relative even if the request is outright illegal. And while we complain about corrupt politicians, we forget that our family system actually requires them to become corrupt: people expect them to pay for everything from fiestas to baptisms to wheels a lot of you buying when elections come around?

Transparency International's choice of the term "lagay" is appropriate. A harmless only seems about bad weather, we should look at how we might see those words.

How MNTC is showing the way

IF HOON LIMBUSWOO, BCT one Manila bank Talbaya Corp. (MNTC) did bring down the toll fees at the North Luzon Expressway (NLEX) by an average of 13 percent. Who would have thought that refinancing are possible in these times of spiraling prices, especially with the advent of the hottest season?

I can still vividly recall having read in the newspapers about the MNTC's declaration during the toll rate fixing process that the NLEX toll fees would be adjusted every two years. Although we were told that the adjustment could go either way, there was the general impression that the changes would always be upward, never downward. Like me, many administrating had that mistaken notion.

But then the MNTC kept its word and really rearranged a surprise package on this rollback. I took note of the reasons the MNTC cited for adjusting the toll rates—the strengthening of the peso against the dollar.

But I'm sure the MNTC could have simply justified maintaining the rates by citing other reasons. As we say in Filipino, "Kung ayaw mag-dahilan, kung gusto, may paraan (If one doesn't like to do it, he can always find a reason not to. But if he really wants to—to it, he will always find a 'way out.' The MNTC took the latter option—and we, the motorists, are the winners.

Why can't other businesses follow suit?

—JEANNIC DE LOS REYES,
Doña Josefa Subd.
Tramo Highway,
Bacoor, Cavite

Majority rule is not meant to sustain graft and greed

IN EFFECTIVELY DISSOLVING the Senate from the unanimously-anti-administration majority bloc, the Senate from giving its votes on Charter change, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's henchmen at the House of Representatives displayed the most shameless brand of dirty politics. They are pushing public patience to the limit.

The pro-administration lawmakers played well their role as trained dogs of a President who has no right at all to rule for lack of a clear mandate. GMA, based on various surveys, is continuously disowned and distrusted by the people because of corruption that she chained her way to ascend to during the 1998 elections.

The way her allies in Congress railroaded even their own misconceived common sense and moral values. There are more pressing needs than the government should address especially at this critical time when the country is still reeling from the devastating effects of typhoons Olivia and Rosing.

Despite the administration's efforts to identify the Cha-cha Express, it has now become clear that all that GMA and her gang in the House wanted was to ram—through a Con-ass dictated by their selfish and money—a ministerial-setup goal.

In saying that Cha-cha opponents are making so much ado over nothing because it is the people who will have decide through a plebiscite(s) the fate of the proposed constitution, they are actually insulting the Filipino people's intelligence. They are practically asking us to forget that they cheated in the 1998 elections, and with that record, a plebiscite cannot guarantee Cha-cha a fighting chance.

By using their members, their cleared and taped the foundation of our democracy. The rule of the majority is a precious feature of our political life as a nation. It was not the majority rule of selfish politicians but the strength of the majority of our people that brought them into—power and not absolute power through "People Power." People power is not a means to abuse power and autocracy but an instrument to check political excesses, opportunism, oppression and bad governance. Majority rule is not a device to sustain corruption and greed but a tool to sustain transparency, accountability and faithfulness in governance.

Labor Sec Maza believes that only through popular and militant street actions can the genuine people's reform agenda—jobs and justice, food and freedom, land and liberation...be realized and achieved.

—BR. FRANCISCO SERRANO JR.,
chair, Lakas ng Mga
Manggagawa (Kapatid)
c/o Archdiocesan Clergy
Homestead, #1 Kaetiranan St.,
Tandang Sora Village, Quezon City

PVAO urged to pay long-delayed disability pensions

I REFER TO CESARIO MI PARLEY, wholehearted support for the Philippine Veterans Affairs Office's (PVAO) unflinching advocacy to the high shrink of responsible and transparent leadership and service.

On that note, Atty. C. Ibarrola rules this opportunity to tell PVAO administrator Rogelio Baccay that out of 130 veterans in Pigcawayan, Cotabato, only six survive, all of us now in our late 80s (I'm going to be 89 years old on March 18, 2007).

In connection with the news report headlined "Nothing lasts, may pensa gov't on PVAO bank pay" (PDI, 11/12/98) I would like to call the attention of PVAO authorities to the unpaid arrears in our disability pensions.

We are hopeful and we think believe that Administrator Baccay and the rest of the PVAO officials can very well make a difference in the payment of our long-delayed entitlements, so that even in the remaining few years of our lives, we the veterans, together with our families, will be able to enjoy the benefits long due us.

—LT. COL. (RET.) LEONARDO
D. SEARSON,
104 Magsaysay St.,
Poblacion 2,
Pigcawayan, Cotabato

English is 'the' global language

AS A MOTHER-TO-AMERICAN citizen now living in Manila for 33 years, I love the Filipino people and their country. By reading the interesting (have gained insights) into the current Philippines culture and citizens.

The Inquirer's Nov. 23 issue prompted me to write this letter. The column of Fernando de Quiles reflected my opinion held by the majority of downtown voters. The arrests of Fr. Joaquin Bernas' no non-ministerial issues who aren't interfaith. The anniversary of Jose Miguel Luz gave me great hope for the future of Philippine education.

The solitaire of Manuel L. Quezon III, on the other hand, confirmed a worthless feeling I have had in the last three weeks of my visit to this country. Most of the young Filipinos I have met cannot understand or speak English very well. My wife, who was educated in the Philippines, understands, writes and speaks English better than I do.

So, senator when Filipinos may feel, the more the world "shrinks" into a global village, the more English becomes a major language of communication. Some Filipinos, Spaniards, French, Chinese, Japanese or Germans may—in their private saying how, but this is a fact of present-day life. In my opinion, one to teach English to young Filipinos at no make them second-class citizens of the world and so marginalize them from competing globally in the fields of medicine, business, science and entertainment.

It appears that Quezon does not realize that the citizens of most countries believe in God and worship. To put country over God is wrong priority. Such thinking might lead to killing those children the killing cause who have different opinions to a person's or I don't think most Filipinos would buy this.

—FRANCIS BUCKALEW,
Sunshine Estates, Tagaytay City

19 years after the MV Doña Paz tragedy

TODAY, WE MARK MARK THE death anniversary of those who perished in the world's worst sea tragedy—the sinking of MV Doña Paz, when it collided with an oil tanker off the coast of Mindoro.

It has been 19 years since the death of my parents and a sister. Each year brings painful remembrance to me and the rest of my siblings. But my family never stops praying and thanking the Lord for helping the pain From our minds; for sowing us love from the trauma we felt; for being there during our times of sorrow and mourning, and most especially for giving us joy and peace in our hearts.

—ALEXA SOPHIA ARANAZA,
73 South Sonata Homes,
Molino II, Bacoor, Cavite

Militants to raise voice at summit

DESPITE THE DEPLOYMENT OF thousands of policemen to prevent protesters from getting close to the Asean Summit venue to be held in Cebu City on January 2000, nothing will stop our peaceful and militant actions to denounce the anti-people agenda of further economic plunder, militarism and state-sponsored terrorism.

And despite the outrageous threat of Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez that activists will be hot to the shorts, church people—especially those belonging to the church groups whose members have become victims of corruption and killings (the Iglesia Filipina Independiente, United Church of Christ in the Philippines and Methodist Church)—will join the national protest delegation to raise their voices on the issues besetting the nation.

In our view, the US-inspired globalization schemes and regional security issues that will be tackled in the Asean Summit are essentially the same anti-people agenda that were best opposed by international activists during Apec summits, G-77/NAM heads of states and other summit of US economic, geo-political and military domination. Under the auspices of US globalization and its war on terror, we can never expect the trade or security agreements coming out of the Asean summit to be truly beneficial to the common people.

As the people's reporter, the Asean administrations and the host governments in Cebu are accountable for millions of pesos in security-laden spots for the heads-bonding of the Asean Summit. The spiraling spots is outrageous especially as thousands of rural poor need to remedy their homes and lives in the face of the massive devastation brought about by unpredictable farming.

Indeed, the continuum of the fraudulent, incest and oppressive Arroyos, Gonzalez and their minions is too much that even the ghosts can't bear to visit them.

The process actions will remember cases of political killings, such as the gruesome murder of Aglipayan Bishop Alberto Ramirez as a case for vantage against the US-backed Arroyo administration. An international court rally for justice will be one of the culminating events of the series of process actions in Cebu that aim to manifest the Filipino people's fulminated to the US-Arroyo plunder and aggression.

—Fr. JOSEF SARABIA OCarm,
Promotion of Church People's
Response (CPR) Edsa, Quezon City

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Char**AC**ter more than Charter Change

The Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines (CEAP) is against the present moves to change the Philippine Constitution.

We would have been open to a Constitutional Convention. But with the recent acts in the House of Representatives - making itself a Constituent Assembly without regard for the Senate or the nation as a whole - even if the decision is now to have a Constitutional Convention instead, we feel that the better move is to postpone the changing of the Constitution. It is not that we think the Constitution is perfect. It is not. It needs changes. But the way things are going, we believe that suspicions of vested interests of our legislators would be minimized or avoided if, for now, we just bracket off these moves on Charter change.

CHARACTER, more than Charter, **change** is needed.

Change our charter, and what would we really achieve if we do not also change our character? A Constitution may be the fundamental law of the land, but if we do not also follow the fundamental promptings of our conscience, what will we really have changed?

To be sure, character development is a lifetime task and challenge. And if that is all we do, it may be argued, then we may never get to change our Constitution at all. We agree. But if there is also no desired change in what we believe and how we behave, then Charter Change no matter how beautiful it may seem to be, will not really lead to the betterment of our nation.

We decry the act of the House of Representatives in making itself the Constituent Assembly. We can grant that our legislators may have good intentions. But the impression given by their act is simply arrogance of power and lack of delicadeza. We commend them if, having realized not just the political consequences of their decision but also its moral implications, they now call for a constitutional convention. But we suggest that they and, indeed, we -- all lay aside even the thought of changing our Charter now.

Charter Change now is being presented -- wrongly -- as the equivalent of institutional reform. It is not. And those who are against Charter Change now are being portrayed as against reform. We are not. We are **FOR** reform - but the right ones at the right time. We are for reforms that really help the poor; changes that strengthen democracy; moves that improve politics as it is practiced today. If those rushing Charter Change are really sincere about reforms, then let there first reform the electoral system and restore its trustworthiness - starting with a thorough revamp of the Commission on Elections (COMELEC). Make the 2007 elections truly credible. Then, when the necessary safeguards against self-interest shall have been set, and after a massive education campaign, maybe we can resurrect the plan to change the Constitution. Until then, let the present Charter stay.

In the schools, colleges, and universities that we run we shall continue teaching our students, aside from the curricula they come to us to follow and learn, love for our country, respect for our laws, and willingness to give our best for God and others, beyond interests of self.

We accept that the call for **CHARACTER change** must start with us and must always continue. As we do this, to the nation we pledge our cooperation in everything that is for the good of our people, and we vow vigilance in preventing what may lead to the nation's ills.

We watch and pray, as Jesus in the Agony in the Garden told his disciples, so we do not fall into temptation. We urge our members to pray that we, our legislators, and our nation as a whole may have the humility to ask to be guided by the Holy Spirit and the strength of will to follow His lead. May we not yield to the temptation to make another Constitution for our country but forget to remake the constitution of our hearts.

What we more urgently need to do now is to watch, pray, and work to **change** -- not our Charter but our **CHARACTER**.

f. Roderick SVD

FR. RODERICK C. SALAZAR, JR., SVD
President

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Across the NATION

70 Pangasinan fishermen missing

Search is on after huge waves sweep fishing boats

By Gabriel Cardenas
Inquirer Northern Luzon

DAGUPAN CITY—AT LEAST 70 FISHERMEN FROM a fishing village in Infanta, Pangasinan, were reported missing after their boats were swept by strong winds and battered by big waves on Saturday near the Scarborough Shoal in the South China Sea.

Nine fire fishermen, operations officer of the Pangasinan police office, said 11 fishermen were earlier rescued after they were found clinging to their capsized boats by fellow fishermen who survived the disaster.

"We are still hoping to find survivors," Tumandong said.

Two Navy helicopters scoured the area on Tuesday but only one survivor was found, he said.

Charlito Manlapaz, barangay captain of the fishing village of Caro, said search and rescue operations began only on Tuesday morning.

"I have reported the incident to the police on Dec. 17, but nobody moved," Manlapaz said.

But Tumandong said authorities only learned of the incidence Monday when a survivor from another fishing boat, Dominador Ramirez, reported the incident to authorities there.

Tumandong said the fishermen usually spend three to five days fishing before returning to shore or no one could have learned of the incident until the survivor reported the incident to the police.

Manlapaz said the seven vessels sailed from Dasol on Dec. 10 to 11 and were supposed to return to shore on the night of Dec. 16.

But at about 10 p.m. that night, raining rebels, locally known as "nortada," began to blow and whipped up waves "as tall as mountains."

"Nortada" (northern wind) is felt here between November and February, Manlapaz said.

Besides boats with three to four crew members were crushed, while the biggest ones capsized," he said.

PCO Gabriel Pesayco, operations officer of the Infanta police, said some of the fishermen managed to paddle to the Scarborough Shoal and sought refuge there.

The Scarborough Shoal is a group of islands, atolls, and reefs in the South China Sea located 130 nautical miles from Infanta.

Manlapaz said more fishermen could be missing than the estimated 70 because fishermen from neighboring Bolinao, Agno and Bauang towns near here have also left the area at that time.

He said two of those missed were from Agno town.

Tumandong said he had sent one team to coordinate with barangay officials in the different fishing villages fronting the South China Sea to determine the exact number of survivors and those missing.

In Zambales, Chief Insp. Rustgie Magno, Sta. Cruz police chief, said some fishermen fishing 30 km from the shoreline of the town noticed the surge of big waves on the night of Dec. 16, forcing them to return to shore.

Magno said police officials in the province alerted all stations to help in search and rescue operations.

The incident comes in the wake of reports that a new typhoon that is set to make landfall in the country soon is in the making and headed toward Japan, sparing the Philippines from further damage. With reports from Cesar Ellis, Inquirer Central Luzon

THE STAGE is set for a Christmas party for orphans and teenagers and women who are victims of abuse at the Nuevo Ecija Convention Center. The event was organized by the provincial government and Campaforma.

Ecija holds day of fun for orphans, abuse victims

By Anselmo Roque
Inquirer Central Luzon

PALAYAN CITY—NOE TRAJEL, Jessie Opre, 15, of Olongapo City, contented a laughing find she would only show to mom.

Although now living in the relative comfort of the Sta. Marina Omura Home in Cabanatuan City, she still wants to see, or even hear, the voice of her father whom she has never seen.

All that she knows is that her father, United States Navy man Howard Nolasc, used to be stationed at the Subic Naval Base and is now living in San Francisco, California. He left the country when she was about to be born on June 26, 1987.

"I don't even have a middle name. My name is a mixture of my mother's," said Opre, who is an education freshman at the Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology in Cabanatuan City.

Ms. Letecia Cabanayan, 18, shares Opre's sad plight.

Cabanayan, now a younger sister sees relief in the eyes of her father, a farmer, when her parents separated when she was seven years old. Unfortunately, her father died a year after the separation and she and her sister were left in the care of her grandmother who also died years later.

Her aunt took care of her and her sister. She was, however, mistreated so she ran away. Cabanayan is also in the Sta. Marina Omura Home so she could go to school. She is now a sophomore taking an education course in the College of Arts and Sciences in Concepcion in Cabanatuan.

"There's something lacking in my life. I often cry because of that missing piece," Cabanayan said.

But on Monday, Opre and Cabanayan forgot their pain and sadness, albeit momentary.

They and more than 1,000 children, teenagers and a number of abused women were treated to a day of fun, songs, dances, food and gifts at the Nueva Ecija Convention Center here.

They shrieked, clapped and cheered as TV personalities Dennis Trillo, Tyrone Perez, Lori Rey, Jaeneen Kuizi, Kathryn Bernardo and Miguel Aguila entertained them.

They watched a magic show and many of them displayed their talents in their group presentations.

The main hall of the convention center was turned into a fantasy land adorned with big balloons, trees with various stuffed animals and lights of different colors.

Music wafted through the hall where a big inflatable dragon and an inflatable "Jungle" were also displayed.

Moments later, they were treated to a fire display of animals like tigers, cobras, snakes, among others.

Nueva Ecija Vice Gov. Maricris Cifra-Joson initiated the activity to mark the birthday of supporters, Rizalene Cuevas of Campaforma Incorporated in this city.

"Thanks to a real life to sustain may or another," Joson said. "This was organized to make them very happy ... and to give them hope for a better future."

Joson said at least 30 boys and girls from the different cities and towns in Nueva Ecija were selected by social welfare officers to join the party.

Some of them were orphans while others belonged to poverty families.

The 15-year-old Opre, eldest of her Aunt Emerita Cachi Jipatal Children in San Antonio town were among those who enjoyed the day. The rest are taken care of children who were neglected, abandoned or abused by their parents and those orphaned and with physical disabilities.

All 11 residents of the Sta. Marina Omura Home and those from Home for the Girls in Barangay Singuiti here, most of them victims of sexual abuse, also joined the activity.

Joson donates his annual bonus as the vice governor and also provides help to the Home for the Girls, which is run by the Department of Social Welfare and Development.

Joson's brother, Cong. Tomas Joson III, said he would also treat children from the different barangays of Cabanatuan City to a party on Friday (Dec. 30) "Wednesday) at the newly renovated Freedom Park in Cabanatuan City.

Gunmen shoot Moro militant, abduct him as wounds bleed

JOLO CITY—A MEMBER OF THE MILITANT Moro group Isnara Bangsamoro who was tapped as the aides of survey attacks here, was shot and abducted by three unidentified gunmen in Tapiza City early morning Monday, authorities said.

The victim, Ibing armed Mohamad Carrell, 34, in Purok 3 in Barangay Maibuan around 2:00 a.m. and forcibly took him away.

Carrell was one of the suspects in the 2000 bomb attacks at the airport and the school here, which killed at least 24 people, and the 2004 Valentine Day bombing.

He was arrested but was later freed for lack of evidence.

Rahima, Carrell's wife, said she was inside the kitchen and went to check on it.

"I saw three masked men. They asked me who was in the other room but I could not answer them because of fear," she said.

Rahima said one of the gunmen went out of the room, one of the three gunmen immediately shot him.

She said her husband was hit in the stomach and in the leg.

"He was profusely bleeding while being dragged outside the house and into one of two vans," she said.

Tapiza City Mayor Boy Uy said authorities are still investigating the abduction.

'...He was profusely bleeding while being dragged outside the house and into one of two vans...'

He said he would closely follow the investigation and would make information available as they come in.

But Halima and her husband's colleagues in the Isnara Bangsamoro said they have no other suspect but authorities.

"It's too early to speculate on who are behind the incident. We are still looking into the motive of the suspects," Uy said in a television interview.

Based on accounts of witnesses, there were at least ten vans with three 20 men packed outside Carrell's house at that time. The vehicles bore the same license plates, GFV 678.

Abdullah Lidasan, secretary general of Isnara Bangsamoro, said the abduction was part of the government's campaign against individuals or groups critical of its policies.

"Our members have been receiving various threats. We are being tagged as members of the New Peoples Army (NPA). Of course, this is a ploy to justify the government to step in from asserting the rights of the Moro people," Lidasan said.

She also cited a recent campaign against Isnara Bangsamoro leaders and other militants in Cotabato City.

Lidasan said five militants in Cotabato City were actually tagged as terrorists and their names posted in various parts of the city.

Jeffrey Tupas, Inquirer Mindanao

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FIRST ILOCANOS IN HAWAII

They wanted to go back after 3-week stormy ride

By Frank Cimatu
Candon City

DEC. 20, 1906 WAS A THURSDAY, A WORRIDAY, but the atmosphere in the harbor of Honolulu that noon was festive. The vessel, SS Doric, was carrying 15 Ilocanos, whose ages ranged from 15 to 56, some of them wearing to return home after that stormy ride that lasted three weeks.

"The 15 Filipinos brought by Mr. Judd aroused considerable attention when the Doric docked yesterday afternoon. They marched down the gangplank ... one of them carrying a fighting cock under his arm," the Pacific Commercial Advertiser (PCA) wrote 100 years ago.

The unnamed Filipino did not get his gamecock back. He went to Olaa plantation in Oahu with the rest of the Ilocanos, all of them from Candon, Ilocos Sur.

But they were not the first 49 Spaniards in the islands.

The Filipino-American historian Isabelo Idiomatoy noted, three other Filipinos were in the Royal Hawaiian II, which welcomed the Doric. Four more could have jumped ship and were working in the sugarcane plantations at that time.

The arrival of the vessel in Honolulu, and the season focus and Hawaii are celebrating its centennial with splendor, represent the first time that Filipinos were finally recruited to work on the islands' sugar plantations.

They were the last group to be called to work in Hawaii. The Chinese came first, followed by the Japanese, Portuguese and Puerto Ricans, as well as Spanish and Russian laborers.

The story of how an American overseer known as A.F. Judd came to the Philippines, supposedly to recruit 300 Filipinos, had been widely read in the PCA, forerunner of the Hawaii Advertiser five eight months, Judd had cited in vain to recruit Filipinos.

Finally, Judd was able to meet with some Candon residents who were wandering in the town of Manila into coming to Hawaii, and things started stirring.

Judd went to Candon and was able to gather 15 men. Five came from the Ilocandia family: Gaetano Gerilla, 37, and Geralio, 27, and Prudencio Ragos, 20. The rest were Julian Galinea, 20; Martin de Jesus, 22; Apolonio Tiamon, 26; Marcelino Bello, 20; Filomeno Bello, 20, and Mariano Cinadio, 20.

"The newcomers are all small men, smaller than the Japanese who come here, but they are no intelligent looking lot. All are young men, most of them under 20 years old and all look very wiry and willing," the PCA wrote.

"Willing" was an apt term because they persevered despite the small pay they got and the hard work they put in the sugarcane fields. Through perseverance, Filipinos eventually dominated the industry and Hawaiian affairs.

From the original 15, there are now about 40,000 Hawaiians of Filipino heritage. Honolulu is now being taught in the University of Hawaii. Many Filipino-American who were in the midterm elections in November were from Hawaii.

"I am happy that when people you trace the history of Filipinos in Hawaii, they think of Candon," said Ilocos Sur Rep. Eric Singson.

When President Macapagal-Arroyo went to Ohio to unveil the iconic historical sugar workers' marker, Singson was surprised that he was asked to deliver a speech in behalf of his town mates. The celebration of the Doric Expedition in Candon was held on Dec. 3 in honor of the ancestor.

Hawaii County General Ariel Ebadilla and Education Secretary Atoli Lapar unveiled the life-size statue sculpted by Guamanian Young Peyton of the World sculptor Juan Cajid Isaac.

A 15-piece sculpture of the 15 original emails made by Bojato City based Kijan Rodino was presented this week to Alcalde at Candon's present to the Hawaiian people.

BOUT by Juan Cajid Issac, this monument to the "Ilocanos" commemorates the centennial of the first wave of Filipinos who were recruited to work in the United States in 1906.

A self-discovery

WHEN Baguio-based artist Kijan Rodino was commissioned to sculpt the first 15 Ilocanos (plantation workers) to work in Hawaii's sugarcane fields 100 years ago, he decided to read as many articles that told their story.

The story of the Ilocanos who brought with him his favorite "pamparud-lot" or gamecock throughout the journey was the one that made him smile. It was the first casualty he modeled.

The image eventually came out, his right hand holding a straw hat touching his heart and his left holding the proud rooster. His sunglasses (native shades) is on his side.

"I decided to capture the moment when they just arrived from the boat. There is fear and sense of adventure in them," Rodino said.

Because he was still working with clay, his figures changed somewhat: there is a new article on the Ilocanos that he would read.

When the bronze arose about the big leather and wood chest that the family of Rhiannie Cortez had with them, he also came out with his figure-carrying that luggage.

Because that expensive chest would have not been bought by Cortez at that time, Rodino decided that he was acting as a part of A.F. Judd, the American who recruited them back home.

He portrayed Simplicio Gerilla and his 13-year-old son, Antonio, praying and with the old man carrying a rosary.

Most of them were wearing oversized clothes because Ilocanos noted that Judd actually bought a "ship-ship" or used clothes for them in Tokyo. It was December then and was freezing cold.

Brothers Cecilio and Prudencio Ragos, who never wrote back to their relatives because they both could not read and write, are portrayed squatting idly.

Rodino said making the figures also brought him to his own self-discovery.

"When I was doing my sculptures, I mentioned to my father about these wards all coming from Candon (Ilocos Sur). That's where we also came from," he said. I did not know about that," he said.

When he went to Candon, he looked for his relatives and connected with his roots. All coming cases, which were eventually made from marble soils, were eventually brought to Honolulu where they are now displayed at the Philippine consulate. —Frank Cimatu

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GMA talks Cha-cha anew; Defensor warns of disaster

By Inquirer staff

The Supreme Court in October rejected the people's initiative campaign as marked by fraud. Last week, Ms Arroyo's allies in the House of Representatives pushed off from the Court on options to the hour of moving opposition from the Roman Catholic Church.

Thanking the AGB for its support for her administration's reforms, Ms Arroyo said she intended to "continue all efforts beyond our term in office."

Three realities

"We know you first all our reforms go through democratic procedures, including our political reforms," the President told AGB officials.

Saying she wanted to take the opportunity to speak about Charter change (Cha-cha), Ms Arroyo pointed out "three realities we face as a nation."

"One, that the people accept the need for Charter change to overhaul the system; two, that there is a need for a unified national consensus on the terms and timetable; and three, that this is a platform consultation of Cha-cha needs to be pursued with urgency and fervor," she said.

"WITH URGENCY AND FERVOR," is how President Arroyo describes her renewed pursuit of Charter change in her speech at the 40th anniversary of the Asian Development Bank on Tuesday. (MANILA BULLETIN)

Need for transparency

He said Cabinet Cha-cha members "will continue to shape our actions for the better future of the Philippines—working closely and inclusively with all stakeholders and institutions, observing transparency and backing up the entire process with a strong reasoning, sound emphasis and robust programs."

"This is a collective and consistent action of interest and our leaders must rise to the challenge," Ms Arroyo stressed.

In a phone interview, Defensor said that pushing Cha-cha through by any means—people's initiative, or constituent assembly or through a constitutional convention (where delegates will be elected)—before next May's elections would be "reaching short of decency" for the President.

GMA ill-advised?

"As members of the Cabinet, we should be protecting the interest of the President rather than [selling her down the road to perdition]," he said.

Defensor has been one of few dissenters in the Cabinet that has been dominated by members of the ruling Lakas party, the political machinery behind the rush to change the Constitution.

Defensor reckoned Ms Arroyo might have been ill-advised to review charter issues on Cha-cha in view after last Sunday's protest rally led by Catholic Church leaders opposed to Con-con or to any attempt on Cha-cha or the issue.

Defensor, a member of the Liberal Party, said Charter change had been "vigorously opposed by the public."

No Palace timetable

A Cha-cha dissenter, former Defense Secretary Avelino Cruz, had been forced to resign due to pressure from the pro-Charter change Lakas faction in the Cabinet.

"We already know how the public feels about moving the issue on Charter change now. We really can't go against public opinion on this," Defensor said.

Ms Arroyo's political adviser, Gabriel Claudio, said the Palace would not provide a timetable for the new Charter change campaign.

'We'll get the consensus'

"What it means is that there will be midterm elections in May 2007," Claudio told the reporters. "On that, Cha-cha should at least be some degree of immediacy."

Asked if Malacañang would still pursue Cha-cha if it failed to obtain unified consensus, Claudio said: "We're not overexploiting that possibility. But there will be no consensus if we say hand enough, we should have that consensus."

In a phone interview, Claudio said the President's message was that the administration's Cha-cha advocacy "has never been partisan, whatsoever or self-serving."

Step in right direction

He said that Charter change was a part of Ms Arroyo's platform commitment during the 2004 election and she had mentioned its positive issues.

Claudio also said that Cha-cha was part of the Arroyo administration's thrust, into "Extra Development Plus and," people should not turn their backs on this vision because it is a cause that is not only legitimate but critical and necessary."

He said that a "step on the right direction" was Speaker Jose de Venecia's proposal for political parties and members of Congress to talk with the Church, other religious groups and civil society.

"That is not for Malacañang to prescribe," Claudio said when asked how can the Palace ensure Charter change done.

"The avenues for changes in the Constitution are in the hands of the people either directly or through Congress," he added.

Elections to push through

Asked whether Malacañang pushed for it before or after the May 2007 polls, Claudio said that what was important was that this would have "public acceptability and consensus."

He also said the midterm elections, including the senatorial elections, would push through next May.

It's Christmas in jail for Smith; CA nixes TRO

By Inquirer staff

needed and the petitioner is now confined thereat," the court said.

It also ordered Smith's camp to provide the lawyers of "Sigaba," the Filipino nickname whose the US Marine had been convicted of raping, a copy of his petition.

Within 10 days

The appellate court also ordered Pedro, presiding judge of the Makati Regional Trial Court Branch 139, the Makati City Jail warden, and Meade to comment on Smith's petition within 10 days of receipt of the copy of the petition.

It directed the Office of the Solicitor General to submit its comment within the same time frame.

It said it would decide on the issue after the submission of all the documents.

Pedro issued the commitment order for Smith through his lawyers led by Jose Justiniano after the court's nullity Nunez Jr., 13 under denying his motion seeking the recall of the judge's commitment order.

The soldier maintained that under Section 6, Article V of the RP-US Visiting Forces Agreement, his custody remained with the US government until the completion of all judicial proceedings related to the rape case he appealed him.

He said Pedro committed grave abuse of discretion and acted without jurisdiction in ordering his confinement at the Makati City Jail.

He added that under the VFA, convicts over US military personnel facing criminal charges in the Philippines should be mutually agreed upon by US and Philippine authorities first.

Smith's lawyers had sought the immediate issuance of a TRO on Pedro's Dec. 23 order.

On Monday, Meade also asked the appellate court to let the Supreme Court decide on Smith's petition.

Muntinlupa

Smith, 21, has been held at the Makati City Jail since his rape conviction on Dec. 6.

But Supt. Serafin Barretto, regional director of the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology, yesterday said the BJMP or administrator of the city jail would ask Pedro's court to transfer the soldier to the custody of the Bureau of Corrections (BuCor) if his plea for custody remained unsolved until next week.

Smith is the latest convict at the city jail, which is a detention facility for minor suspects still facing trial.

"We are already breaking the law here. He should be brought to Muntinlupa," Barretto said in a phone interview.

According to Barretto, subsequently, Smith can be transferred to a BuCor facility such as the New Bilibid Prisons in Muntinlupa immediately after being found guilty of a crime and sentenced to serve time.

"If the petition is still unresolved by next week, we will submit a manifestation for Judge Nunez to issue an order for [Smith] to be brought to the BuCor," Barretto said, adding:

"But if the US and Philippine governments will have an agreement where he should be held, we will follow that."

Diplomatic approach

Sought for comment, Smith's lead lawyer Justiniano said a "diplomatic approach" could remedy such a move, should the RTC pursue it.

He said transferring Smith to a BuCor facility would be "in contravention" of Pascual's commitments order.

Justiniano had ruled that "the custody of accused Smith by the US military authorities was terminated after the completion of the trial and rendition of [sic] judgment of conviction."

He disagreed Smith's argument that, based on the VFA, he should remain under American watch until the completion of judicial proceedings, including appeal.

He further justified his decision to commit Smith to the local jail instead of the national penitentiary, by saying that this was in compliance with the VFA.

As in his Dec. 4 ruling, Pedro maintained in his Dec. 23 order that Smith's detention at the city jail was temporary and only until Philippine and US authorities agreed on which local facility he should serve his sentence of up to 40 years.

Smith's new quarters

Barretto said Smith was transferred this weekend from the city jail's security section to a smaller room.

"He was transferred to an old death row cell that has been empty. He has been [in the security section] for so long and [his presence] disrupts operations of the warden there," Barretto said.

He said jail personnel evaluated Smith's attitudes in the office where Smith had stayed.

Barretto described Smith's new quarters as measuring around four square meters, with barred doors that records confirm, with an electric fan, a private room by share toilet-and a door that was always locked.

The room, once used as an office of the female jail warden, was a short walk away from the separate jail cells for female inmates and the jail warden's dining range, Barretto said, adding:

"The implement the same security [arrangement] by him though it is better in the room because the walls are solid concrete. He still has visitors from the US Embassy and his lawyers, but they cannot [enter] long like before because it is really for inside the room."

LOVERS' OFFENSIVE: An American Marine of the 3rd Expeditionary Brigade cuddles the wreaths of Our Lady of Peace in Paranaque during the gift-giving of American servicemen to the US envoy Kristie Kenney. (AFP)

Justiniano said the room would get crammed with food or five inside. He said a mattress, which he guessed was brought by Smith's American guards, was laid on the floor.

"He asks me when his petition before the Court of Appeals will be resolved, and I told him that I can't answer that. But somehow, his spirits are lifted whenever he gets letters sent [to him] by his supporters," Justiniano said.

Evelyn Ursua, Meade's lawyer, said it would be correct to transfer Smith to the national penitentiary.

"He should be detained there. In fact, there is more respect for [him] that is the city jail," Ursua said.

Act now

Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago urged the appellate court should act now on Smith's petition before deciding to transmit it to the Supreme Court to avoid damaging RP-US relations.

"The Court of Appeals should act now before the detention becomes a major irritant. After that, it can transmit the case to the Supreme Court," said Santiago, chair of the Senate foreign relations committee on the VFA.

Under the Rules of Court, the appellate court has only a 90-day TRO, "even without having to resolve grave abuse," said Santiago, an international law expert, a former trial court judge, and the chair of the Senate committee on foreign relations, said the warden of the court from the appellate court to the Supreme Court might have "a history of fact."

But she pointed out that "justice delayed is justice denied."

Definitions

Santiago also said the issue of custody depended on the interpretation of the phrase "complete trial proceedings" in the VFA.

Black's Law Dictionary defines judicial proceeding as "any proceeding conducted before a court involved and taken, or the course prescribed to be taken in connection for the determination of a controversy," according to Santiago.

The legal reference book, "Words and Phrases," quoting from the 111 case of Robinson v. Kessler, specifies that the term "judicial proceedings" is "not limited to trials, but includes every proceeding of a judicial nature before a court clothed with judicial powers," she said.

"The argument that the end of trial constitutes completion of all judicial proceedings, leads to the absurd conclusion that an appeal to the Supreme Court is not a judicial proceeding. That is erroneous and absurdum, meaning it is an argument that leads to absurd conclusions," she said. With a report from DJ Yap/gmanews

Airlines' wish for all seasons: Quiet at Naia

By Inquirer staff

The Airline Operators Council (AOC) once again plans to propose the "silent airport" concept to the airport authority. AOC chair Lourdes Sebajel said yesterday.

"We want to encourage this for the simple reason that the Naia is too congested and passengers want a relaxing atmosphere at the airport when they arrive or when they leave," Sebajel told the Inquirer.

Announcements are routinely heard all over the Naia terminals—from flight information details, reminders and even promotions for an ongoing raffle promo for arriving Filipino passengers...at least every five minutes. Leaving practically no quiet moments at the airport.

Countless announcements

And with the holiday season, piped-in Christmas music is played almost the entire day.

As staff at the Manila flight guiding information office told the Inquirer that the major authority's Continuous efforts promo was being announced three times per arriving flight data, aside from the regular announcements of flight arrivals and departures.

Asked how many announcements were made a day, the staff, who requested anonymity, shrugged and said, "Time count."

Introducing the silent airport concept in international airports in Southeast Asia is among the projects of the Asian AOC, which the Philippine AOC currently chairs.

Patricia Evasco, head of the Maintenance Operations Committee in Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA), told the Inquirer that his tour group was also discussing with the Malaysian airport authority the implementation of the silent airport at the KLIA.

Cultural issues

But "cultural issues" seem to be giving its Malaysians are used to hearing their names being called," Evasco said.

Nevertheless, Evasco said, the number of announcements at the KLIA had already been reduced.

"Airports shouldn't have all these constant noise," said Evasco, whose group was in Manila for a meeting with the Philippine AOC.

More than a year ago, the AOC broached the idea of a "silent airport," but the Manila Government, at Airport Authority (Maia) had said the proposal would have to be carefully evaluated first.

Stressful

The AOC pointed out that flying would be stressful for several passengers, and that having a "silent airport" would help them rest and relax while waiting for their flights, or upon arriving.

"This is a concept already being adopted by many international airports worldwide, Sebajel said.

"Especially for the elderly and passengers," Sebajel said. "A lot of Filipino passengers actually get left behind in airports in other countries because they are so used to having their flights paged."

Sebajel said that the concept could be implemented gradually at the Naia until "passengers get used to it."

Hard-up guard returns ₱500,000

JUNK SHOP HERO. Security guard Jorge Bacod, 37, assigned at Tower C of the Makoto Condominium in Quezon City belongs to the country's dwindling species of honest people. JOAN BONDOC

"The thought of running away with the money never occurred to me, though some of my friends were urging me to do so," said Bacod, a resident of Greenhow Security Service Corp. assigned at Makoto Hills Condominium.

"I don't know why, but I was never tempted. Returning people's belongings is part of my job, so I did my job," he said in Filipino.

On Nov. 4, Bacod found a belt bag containing a wad of P500 bills amounting to P10,000, and a few die of 10 dollar bills worth $10,000 on the condominium lobby.

He immediately brought the matter up with his superiors, and they tracked down the owner, who turned out to be a man staying at the same building.

Bacod said that when he went to return the money, the man whom condominium security officials identified as Antonio Alonzo Hannibal Jr. was profuse in thanking him—and then was soon on his way.

Unsalled reward

Ten minutes later, the man, who said he was about to go on an overseas trip, called Bacod back and handed him P5,000 as a reward.

It was a mere fraction of the amount he had returned, but at least it was guilt-free. Bacod said he was more than happy to accept it.

Bacod, who is separated from his wife, told the story to his children, 7-year-old Mark Kevin and 6-year-old Jonas, who are both in his custody.

Importance of being honest

The children had stopped schooling after their parents separated. Bacod said the kids are now sharing a small apartment with three other families.

"I want my children to live by my example. I hope when they're older they'll realize the importance of being honest," Bacod told the reporter.

"If I had kept the money, I would have been able to buy a lot of things. But who knows what that would cost me in the long run."

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More Pinoys hungrier now, survey says

A RECORD 3.3 MILLION HOUSEHOLDS HAVE reported experiencing hunger at least once in the past three months, according to the latest survey of the Social Weather Stations.

For the 12th consecutive quarter (since June 2004), hunger incidence among households remained at double-digits, reaching a new record high of 20 percent, surpassing the previous record of 16.9 percent reached in both September and March this year, according to the final 2006 SWS survey conducted last Nov. 24 - 28.

The survey also found more than half of the families (51 percent) calling themselves "poor to gutom" and all persons saying they were "poor in terms of food."

Moderate hunger, defined as households who went hungry "only once" or "a few times" in the last three months, rose to 13.3 percent—another record high, up from 12.6 percent last September. It surpassed the previous record of 12.9 percent posted in August 2005.

Severe hunger, defined as going hungry "often" or "always" in the last three months, was down to 3.8 percent, from 4.0 percent in September.

Moderate hunger rose in Metro Manila (from 8.2 percent to 13.7 percent) and in Luzon (from 11.6 percent to 14.7 percent). It also increased slightly in Visayas (from 13.7 percent to 15.3 percent) while it remained steady in Mindanao at 17.2 percent.

Meanwhile, severe hunger increased in Metro Manila (from 4.6 percent to 5 percent) and in Mindanao (from 4 percent to 5 percent) but decreased in Luzon (from 4.2 percent to 3 percent) and in Visayas (from 4 percent to 3.7 percent).

The over-all self-rated poverty hardly changed nationwide, from 51 percent in September to 52 percent in November.

The Mother Self-Rated Poverty Threshold, or the median monthly budget needed by self-rated poor households "to escape poverty" rose from P10,000 to P12,000 in Metro Manila.

The threshold, however, declined from P6,000 to P5,000, while it remained steady in Visayas and Mindanao at P6,000 and P5,000, respectively.

Meanwhile, four in 10 Filipino households (40 percent) considered themselves "poor," based on the type of food their family ate, as 27 percent put themselves on the "borderline," and 32 percent considered themselves as "not food-poor."

The survey also showed that among those who rated themselves "food poor," 56 percent said they had experienced hunger in the past three months, whereas among those who rated themselves "poor in general," 21 percent said they had experienced hunger in the last three months.

"The long survey experience shows that household heads' reports about poverty in general, poverty in terms of food, and hunger are internally consistent," SWS said in a statement.

The survey was conducted between Nov. 24-29 using face-to-face interviews of 1,200 nationally representative household heads 2100 each in Metro Manila, the rest of Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao. It had a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percentage points. — Inels Pedrosa, Inquirer Research

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Aplus METRO
Editor Ester G. Dipasupil

Woman with ₱.5M shot dead by robbers

Victim carrying payroll money killed in front of her 2 children

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

THREE ROBBERS SHOT DEAD A 34-YEAR-OLD woman in front of her two children in Mandaluyong City yesterday afternoon before escaping with P500,000 in payroll money.

The holder which hit Jennifer Divino in her right shoulder also pierced her lungs, police said.

Based on initial police reports, Divino, her two children and a company driver were on board a Toyota Land Cruiser at about 1:45 p.m. when the incident occurred.

Divino, who the police said was a secretary of Bilangrad Construction, had just withdrawn money from a Land Bank branch in Pasig City.

As the Land Cruiser stopped at the usually clogged corner of Shaw Boulevard near Pilar Street, three men wielding .45 caliber handguns surfaced a motorcycle blocked the vehicle.

Suddenly the three men opened fire at the Cruiser as two of them got off the motorcycle. One smashed the glass window on the driver's side while the other broke the window on the passenger's side where Divino was seated, Mandaluyong police chief Supt. Ernesto Hilaga said in the briefing.

Divino managed to thrust her body containing the cash outside the vehicle, according to witnesses, but one of the suspects fired at her.

The robbers quickly fled with the cash while Divino was brought to the Lourdes Hospital where she died at 2:50 p.m.

FIESTA LIGHTS UP
Mall goers in Pasay City are treated to a dazzling fireworks display in celebration of the holiday season.

Waitress dies after failing to get out of bar on fire

By Jocelyn R. Uy

AN ILOILAN-OLD WAITRESS working in a Parañaque City sidewalk bar was the lone casualty in a fire that hit the establishment yesterday.

According to witnesses, Cecilia Pontebello III is reportedly before she fell asleep at around 2:30 a.m. yesterday on the second floor of Remy's Sidewalk Bar on Sucatinang Street in Barangay Baclaran.

"But some witnesses also claimed that the fire started in the kitchen on the first floor of the sidewalk bar," city fire marshal Supt. Leonides Perez told the Inquirer.

Pontebello had reportedly been drinking before she fell asleep after her shift was over. Jennifer Ignacio, a coworker, told Inquirer that the victim failed to wake up and get out of the burning window first.

Arson investigators have yet to determine what triggered the fire which spread to a neighboring three-story window apartment and several other commercial establishments.

Perez said an split-air shop and a hardware store were not spared by the blaze.

He pegged the damage at ₱3 million after it was put out shortly after 5 a.m. yesterday.

The fire official added that the bar owners could be held liable for the incident if they find out that the establishment had failed to comply with the safety code provisions.

"Based on initial investigation, there are some violations but we have to review the establishment's documents," Perez said.

Psychic in Ballocillo case 'on right track'

By Alexis Pajo

THE PSYCHIC WHO VOLUNTEERED TO HELP the police in their investigation into the murder of Assistant Solicitor General Hector Ballocillo said he was "on the right track."

Chief Supt. Roberto Rosales, Southern Police District (SPD) chief, told reporters in Camp Crame yesterday that they are "testing the credibility" of the psychic, and so far, he has provided them "good information."

"These are information given by the psychic that matched some of the details in our investigation. We are checking if this has any relevance. We are confident that we can find the suspects because the (the psychic) is on the right track," Rosales said.

He stressed, however, that the police would "not veer away from the scientific investigation."

"It (the investigation) is still to be based on evidence. Any information from the psychic is inadmissible in court. But we thought there's no harm in trying," Rosales explained.

So far, the psychic has told police that the three suspects in the case were hired killers. He also revealed the killers' names although Rosales refused to divulge the information to media.

According to Rosales, psychics "should be used as some sort of tool" only.

"Out of the blue, someone volunteered the services of the psychic. He (psychic) just asked for the birthdays of the victims," he added.

The police official said he accepted the psychic's offer of help after he saw on television how psychics and clairvoyants tackled psychic Federal Bureau of Investigations in its crime probes.

Ballocillo and his 22-year-old son, Brandon, were on their way to work in Makati City last Dec. 6 when armed men shot them at close range.

The Parañaque police and the National Bureau of Investigation said earlier the killing could be work-related.

The elder Ballocillo was handling several cases, including the expropriation of the Ninoy Aquino International Airport terminal 3.

NBI warns of plot to kill DOJ's Velasco

By Margaux C. Ortiz and John Bersamo

AN OFFICIAL OF THE NATIONAL BUREAU of Investigation (NBI) yesterday revealed a plot to kill Justice Assistant Secretary Ricardo Blanco Jr. who is "on the right track."

Chief Supt. Roberto Rosales, Southern Police District (SPD) chief, told reporters in Camp Crame yesterday that they are "testing the credibility" of the psychic, and so far, he has provided them "good information."

"These are information given by the psychic that matched some of the details in our investigation. We are checking if this has any relevance. We are confident that we can find the suspects because the (the psychic) is on the right track," Rosales said.

NBI deputy director for Regional Operations Services Reynaldo Esmeralda and Velasco sought the bureau's help on the threat to his life which he learned through a letter sent by an informant.

"Velasco was very concerned about this so-sure threat against his life," Esmeralda said in an interview with reporters.

The NBI official said that according to the informant, he found out about the plot two weeks ago when he and a friend passed by a restaurant on Visayas Avenue in Quezon City.

In the letter to the state prosecutor, the informant said that he overheard from "reasonable" armed men talking about killing a "Visayan Datuan" to avenge their lawyer-friend.

Feeling that there could truly be one person whom the four men were talking about, he decided to warn the DOJ official.

When Velasco received the letter, he immediately alerted Esmeralda, who assigned the case to the NBI National Capital Region (NCR) Office.

The agents will investigate if the clay plot was connected to the certification Velasco has been handling for months now, Esmeralda said.

The NBI official added that he was positive that Velasco was the target of the plot since the prosecutor has been receiving death threats lately.

Velasco's earlier suspended the escorts when he noticed suspicious individuals around his house three months ago, according to Esmeralda.

"Of course, danger is really part of the hazards of the job but we should not take those threats lightly," the NBI official said.

"On the part of Velasco, he must be extra careful," he added.

DID YOU KNOW

THE UNIVERSITY of the Philippines' Vinzons was modeled after Peninsula Polytechnic, the late artist's father, who was an engineering and chemistry student at the university when a political incident on Palawan made the statue in 1938. UP's architect Richard Palmes requested Valentino to create a sculpture based on the second stanza of Dr. Jose P. Rizal's "Mi Ultimo Adios," where the national hero expressed willingness to give up his life for his country. UP students and staff raised P2,000 in two months, a hefty sum at the time, to finance the project. The statue's height, 3.5 meters, represents 300 years of Spanish colonization. The original statue can be found at the third floor of the UP Main Library.

Ch11, Bookish Agent Award

Casino fronting as Internet cafe raided by NBI

By Margaux C. Ortiz

NATIONAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION (NBI) agents raided an online casino fronting as an Internet cafe in Cubao eight in a group for eighteen strip in Manila and seized 23 computer units containing sophisticated gambling programs.

The NBI agents conducted the raid on Hot Ball Internet Cafe, allegedly owned and operated by Koreans, upon the request of the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp. (Pagcor).

Pagcor officials had certified that the amusement center was not licensed or authorized to operate as a game facility according to an NBI report.

Several case

The operation took place a week after agents of the NBI Anti-Fraud and Computer Crimes Division (NBCCD) headed by Regional Director Ethyr Monson Jr. raided an alleged gambling den disguised as an amusement center in Tomas Morato, Quezon City.

NBI investigation showed that the Quezon City establishment, which yielded 71 operative slot machines, was also owned by a Korean.

The seized slot machines were estimated to be worth over P21 million. In addition, they were said to be "so advanced" that the Pagcor's own machines failed to compare here.

Before raiding the Internet cafe at the corner of Julio Nakpil and J. Bautista Streets in Malate, NBI agents applied for a search warrant.

Special Investigator Raul Jerrick of the NBI-NBCCD said the increasing number of Koreans operating online casinos and gambling dens "may have something to do with their refusal to pay business taxes in the country."

Fee per hour

Jerrick also noted that the Internet cafe discouraged nonKoreans from entering the establishment by imposing a P100 per hour fee for its services.

"Customers normally pay P15 per hour to surf the Internet or they end up spending Fast Ball," Jerrick said.

The NBI investigator likewise said that the online games at the Internet cafe could also be payable in Euros.

Apart from the 23 computer units, the NBI agents also seized 17 office chairs and 150 prepaid cards allegedly used to access the online games.

"The cafe's customers pay for the Internet cards with US dollars or Korean won, again discouraging local customer from patronizing the establishment," Jerrick said.

Identification

The NBI agents invited for questioning four Koreans believed to be involved in the establishment's operations.

"But we have yet to identify the actual owners and operators of Fast Ball," Jerrick said.

The suspects face charges for violating Republic Act 9487 or the Act Increasing the Penalties for Illegal Numbers Games.

Policeman in extortion case lands in jail

By Tina S. Santos

A MANILA POLICEMAN FOUND himself in jail after he was nabbed by his colleagues for allegedly endorsing money laundering activities of the other day in Ermita.

Charged with robbery extortion, illegal arrest and acts of lasciviousness was PO3 Eduardo Cayabyab, 39, assigned in the Ermita Watchdog Section of the Manila Police District (MPD).

Also arrested and charged were his civilian cohorts identified as Ronald Cipriano, 25, of Sta. Ana, Manila and Leroy de la Cruz, 22, of Tramo Street, Pasay City.

An investigation showed that members of the MPD Ermita Station were on patrol on Pedro Gil Street at around 10:45 p.m. last Monday when they noticed a taxi cab parked near Ryan Hotel.

Behind the taxi was a Toyota Straw, which policemen claimed, had been used in several criminal incidents in the past but had always managed to escape.

When the two vehicles left the area, the police operatives followed them. Fearing they were being tailed, the drivers of both vehicles pulled up short.

Authorities managed to catch up with them on specific issue in Remita, Manila.

Cayabyab, who was driving the Toyota Straw, alighted from the vehicle and approached the policemen who ran two women inside the van.

The two—identified as Rosbe Buenaventura, of Cainta, Malabon City and Lalaine Obando, of Millennium Plaza, Makati City—claimed they were abducted by the suspects.

The women also told the policemen that their American friend, Evan Turner, was being held in the taxi by Cayabyab's cohorts.

Supt. Rogelio Rondez Jr., station commander of the Ermita Police District, said the suspects initially took P400 belonging to the victims, but they demanded a bigger amount. They were later caught by operatives.

Cayabyab also allegedly touched the women's private parts as he supposedly searched them for drugs.

Rondez said that Cayabyab had been involved in similar offenses in the past, but had always managed to escape arrest.

"Cayabyab was relieved from his post at MPD Station 1 in Precinct but months after he was allegedly involved in robbery-extortion activities," he added.

All they (Pasig vendors) want for Christmas

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

DISPLACED FROM THE SIDEwalk, vendors are asking the Pasig City Hall for just one gift this Christmas: That they be allowed to sell their wares in front of the Mutya ng Pasig Public Market.

"We are asking for some consideration so our families will also be happy this Christmas," Pasig United Market Federation president Bon Mallorca (Bad) Ali told the reporters.

Ali said her group represented about 300 vendors selling wares on the sidewalks of the biggest public market in the metropolis.

The city government had been driving illegal vendors away to ease traffic on Market Avenue.

But clearing operations turned violent the other morning when unidentified persons hurled a pillbox at the operatives, hurting two persons, including an 8-year-old boy.

Police said clearing operations would be sustained. Seventeen policemen were also sent to the market to provide undercover security, officials said. But yesterday noon, vendors were still seen occupying the sidewalk in front of the public market.

Legislature vendors paying for stalls inside the market had been complaining of lower sales because some buyers had been buying products from sidewalk vendors, police added. But a 65-year-old vegetable vendor told the lyzers she sits 300 feet for the sidewalk vendors.

"They just want to raise more money," said the vendor, who pays up to P15,000 in rental, electricity and water fees monthly.

Ali said they had written Pasig City Mayor Vicente Eusebio at early as three weeks ago asking him to allow them to occupy the sidewalks around the market at least until the first week of January.

The vendors also said Eusebio gave them three weeks last year to sell on the streets—but not after a clash between sidewalk cleaning members and vendors protecting their wares.

Ali said they would try to meet with Eusebio to reiterate their appeal.

"We are willing to pay parent fees, just like last year. We are all residents of Pasig City anyway," she added.

The mayor blast on Monday noon was the second time this month an alleged pillbox exploded in the public market.

Two weeks ago, three persons were hurt when an alleged pillbox exploded in front of the market entrance after witnesses heard two groups of vendors yelling at one another.

MetroBriefs

P2 million lost in factory fire

P2 million pesos worth of plastic materials were lost yesterday as a fire caught up in a manufacturing plastic firecast broke out inside a factory in Valenzuela City. Chief Insp. Rolando Bautista, the city fire chief, said that sparks flying from the electric blower started the blaze after they ignited an easily flammable material stored inside the Alima Poly factory on San Gabriel St. in Karuhatan. Bautista said the fire, which started at 1:20 p.m., was placed under control around an hour later with no deaths or injuries reported. He added that tool during the fire were pending materials and equipment used to shape plastic products. Ironically, the factory, Bautista said, was owned by a fire volunteer. Fortunately, the factory had a fire truck which was able to respond quickly. "I did inform it is not yet fixed before I put the blaze from spreading to other areas in the compound," Bautista added.

Mary C. Cempar

Binay raring to present proof

MAKATI Mayor Jejomar Binay is looking forward to presenting in court evidence against accusations that he and other city officials had ghost employees in the City Hall payroll. Speaking for Binay, Makati information chief Joey Salgado said Binay would next present before the Court of Appeals his defense to the allegation made by his political rival, Ramon Bilbao, a complaint that proved resulted in his suspension and Bilbao in his complaint, Bilbao charged that Binay and his councilors were liable for "grave misconduct, abuse of authority and his conduct prejudicial to the best interest of the service" for conspiring to defraud the Makati City government by padding about 1,000 ghost employees on the payroll. In a resolution which was released the other day, the appellate court granted on Dec. 15 a preliminary injunction stopping Makati ding from suspending Binay. Vice Mayor Gerardo Blancaflor and 40 city councilors until the court can hear the complaint's merits. "What it shows is a good indication that the court sees in the arguments of the mayor. There will be hearings and we feel that we are now poised for the court the issues for the mayor's arguments against the case," said Salgado.

Jaime F. Galvezmoh

UP Press takes a break

THE UNIVERSITY of the Philippines Press Store flyers in Diliman, Quezon City will be closed from Dec. 27 to Jan. 7, 2007 in observance of the holidays. Just the last day of the Christmas sale today. All UP Press titles are selling at discounted prices of up to 50 percent. Books for the first opening of the UP Press Store's second branch in Cebu City early next year.

Religious tensions brewing in Europe

The European Union's estimated 13 million Muslims – at least 3.5 percent of the 25-nation bloc's population – are confronting a rise in "Islamophobia," indicated by a report released Monday.

SOURCES: European Monitoring Center on Racism and Xenophobia, Pew Global Attitudes Project AFP

Nokor nuke talks enter crucial phase

BEIJING — TWO SENIOR US officials expressed hope that direct talks Tuesday with officials from North Korea on a diplomatic drive to persuade the Stalinist regime to give up its nuclear weapons entered a crucial phase.

Western experts from the invitation met in Beijing to discuss a dramatic dispute over US sanctions on the North that the cash-strapped nation has said must be resolved before it will consider surrendering its nuclear arms.

They met on the sidelines of key six-nation talks aimed at convincing North Korea to disarm, and which resumed only last Monday after a 13-month suspension caused by Pyongyang's objections to the sanctions.

The restart of the negotiations came after North Korea shocked the world on Oct. 9 with its first-ever nuclear test.

As the financial curbs hobbled down here Tuesday, officials said the chief US and North Korean envoys to the six-nation forum met separately for their first formal bilateral encounter since the talks restarted.

While no details were immediately available on what had been discussed in both meetings, US envoy Christopher Hill said earlier Tuesday that the day's events would be vital for determining if Pyongyang may be prepared to disarm.

North Korea had resumed to the forum in a defiant mood on Monday with its chief envoy Kim Kye-Gwan outlining a long list of demands he said must be met before it would consider scrapping its nuclear arms.

Under the US sanctions, $24 million belonging to North Korean leader Kim Jong-Il and other members of his ruling elite have been frozen in Macau bank.

Adds Jeon delivering these funds, Kim told that United Nations sanctions imposed on North Korea in October after its test must also be lifted.

Kim further demanded that North Korea be given help to build up a nuclear reactor for power needs and that the US policy of "hostility" against it must be dropped.

Hill, as well as the Japanese and South Korean chief delegates, aired as downplay the North's opening demands, describing them as opening gambits with Tuesday's negotiations important to see if compromise would be made.

"I think I would be hard pressed to say any progress was made [on Monday]," Hill said.

"[But] today is a much more important day to see how things are going to go. We need to make progress on the basis of our September agreement. We need to get going on implementing that." The September agreement was a deal brokered in the six-party forum in which North Korea said it would give up its nuclear program in return for security guarantees, energy benefits and other aid.

North Korea pulled out of the six-party talks — which include the United States, China, Russia, South Korea and Japan — two months after the September deal in protest at the US financial sanctions.

The United States had previously maintained that the sanctions issue can't be brought into the six-party forum, insisting they were a law enforcement issue unrelated to the North's nuclear program.

But following the sanctions row, Washington agreed to discuss the sanctions in the forum, a crucial compromise that led to Pyongyang agreeing to return to the talks.

However Hill insisted again on Tuesday that the international community would not accept North Korea as a nuclear power.

"We have made it very clear that we are not going to live with their nuclear weapons," he said.

Japanese envoy Kenichiro Sasae said Monday's demands from the North Koreans were unacceptable. AFP

Nasa, Google bring space exploration to the Internet

SAN FRANCISCO — GOOGLE AND US space agency Nasa announced an alliance on Monday to solve scientific mysteries and channel information from space around the world via the Internet.

The online search powerhouse signed a Space Agreement Act in a move that formalized a partnership started last year when Google said it would build a research center next door to Nasa Ames Research Center on the edge of Silicon Valley in Northern California.

In what was heralded as the first in a series of joint collaborations, Google and scientists at Ames said they would put "the most useful of Nasa's information on the Internet," turning data being spun for the Internet over three-dimensional maps of the moon, weather satellite imagery, and real-time tracking of the International Space Station.

"This agreement between Nasa and Google will soon allow every American to experience a virtual flight over the surface of the moon or through the canyons of Mars," Nasa administrator Michael Griffin said in a release.

"This innovative combination of information technology and space science will make Nasa's space exploration work accessible in everyone."

Nasa and Google teams met recently to discuss computer science problems facing both organizations and ways to jointly tackle these challenges, according to both organizations. AFP

WORLD BRIEFS

Spy poisoning probe ends

MOSCOW — British detectives probing the murder of former Russian spy Alexander Litvinenko have wound up their investigation in Moscow and are due to leave for home on Tuesday, a British police source said on Monday. No details of what the firebrand Kremlin critic had discovered were available. Latvia's Russian agency Interfax, quoting what it said was an informed source, reported that the investigators had interviewed six people including Dmitry Kovtun and Andrei Lugovoy, who met Litvinenko in London on Nov. 1, the day he fell ill with radiation poisoning. Litvinenko died on Nov. 23 from a lethal dose of polonium-210. He has described his suspected Putin of being behind his death but the Kremlin has denied the allegations as nonsense. Reuters

Cartoon legend Barbera dies

LOS ANGELES — Legendary Hollywood animator Joseph Barbera, whose characters included William Hanna and Barbera Studios with his partner William Hanna nearly 50 years ago, and figures to become one of Hollywood's best-known animation companies producing hundred of cartoons and winning numerous awards. He died at his home in the Los Angeles area ceremonially of Santa Clay with his wife Sheila by his side, Warner Bros. said this morning. The details were disclosed. Reuters

US-India nuclear pact signed

WASHINGTON — US President George W. Bush on Monday signed a landmark civilian nuclear deal with India, a controversial pact he hailed as critical to better US ties with the world's largest democracy. "Two United States and India are natural partners," Bush said at a White House signing ceremony, calling the agreement "evidence of the growing bonds of trust between our two countries." The US president and Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh agreed to the deal during Bush's July 2005 visit to India, and the US Congress approved the arrangement on Dec. 9. AFP

The WORLD

Editor Lawrence K. Fenco

Iraq attacks at record high–Pentagon

WASHINGTON—VIOLENT ATTACKS IN IRAQ have soared to the highest level on record, the Pentagon said in a quarterly report, describing Moqtada al-Sadr's Mahdi Army militia as the single largest threat to stability.

The report, titled "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq," said there was an average of 959 attacks per week between Aug. 12 and Nov. 11, the highest recorded level of violence since Congress ordered the Pentagon to issue the reports in 2005.

There was a 22 percent jump in attacks compared to the three preceding months, according to the report released Monday.

Sixty-eight percent of the attacks were aimed at soldiers with the US-led coalition, but most casualties were Iraqis, according to the report.

"The violence in Iraq poses a grave threat to political progress," the report said, adding that some of the increase "could be attributed to a seasonal spike in violence during (the holy month of) Ramadan." Attacks on infrastructure have dropped, but the cumulative effect of attacks have strained services for Iraqis, according to the report.

Fifty-four percent of all attacks took place in the provinces of Baghdad and Al-Anbar, outside of that area, which encompasses most of what US officials call the Sunni Triangle, "more than 90 percent of Iraqis reported feeling very safe in their neighborhood," it said.

The biggest threat is posed by now Sadr's Mahdi Army militia, "which has replaced al-Qaeda in Iraq as the most dangerous combatant of prominence in Iraq," according to the report.

It also said that the National Reconciliation and Dialogue Project had "shown little progress," as sectarian violence "has steadily increased despite warnings among religious and tribal leaders." The report also said that total civilian casualties were up by two percent compared to the previously record-reported.

The report was released just hours after former CIA chief Robert Gates, 63, was sworn in as US defense secretary, replacing the embattled Donald Rumsfeld.

"Failure in Iraq at this juncture would be a calamity that would haunt our nation, despite our credibility and ecological hurricane for decades to come," Gates said at the swearing-in ceremony. AFP

A NEW species of Bornean fighting fish named Betta ahetti. REUTERS

A NEW species of tree frog named Rhacophorus gadingensis. REUTERS

Scientists find over 50 new species in Borneo

JAKARTA—SCORES OF NEW SPECIES OF animals and plants including a catfish with prize-eating teeth and a tree frog with striking bright green eyes have been found in the past year in the forests of Borneo, a WWF report said on Tuesday.

The discoveries include 30 unique fish species, two new frog species, 16 ginger species, three orchid species and one large-bodied plant species, the conservation group said.

"These discoveries reaffirm Borneo's position as one of the most important centers of biodiversity in the world," said Stuart Chapman, WWF International Coordinator of the Heart of Borneo Program.

"The more we look the more we find," he added.

Scientists had found a miniature fish—the world's second smallest vertebrate, measuring less than 1 centimeter in length and living in the acidic blackwater peat swamps of the island, the report said.

Discoveries also included an Bornean fighting fish, including one with an iridescent blue-green shading, and a cichlid with protruding teeth and an adhesive belly which allows it to cling to rocks.

In terms of plants, WWF said the ginger discoveries more than doubled the total number of the Etlingera species, while three new tree species of the genus Beilschmiedia were found.

A number of the species were found in the "Heart of Borneo," a 220,000 sq km highland area covered with equatorial rainforest in the center of the island, it said. Reuters

Ex-spy chief sworn in as US defense chief

WASHINGTON—FORMER CIA DIRECTOR Robert Gates was sworn in as US defense secretary Monday, giving new leadership to a military involved in two and faced with crucial decisions on a faltering mission in Iraq.

Gates, 63, who took the oath of office at the White House early Monday morning, replaces Donald Rumsfeld, the architect of the Iraq war who resigned under fire after nearly six years at the helm of the Pentagon.

US President George W. Bush was asked about a controversial swearing-in at the Pentagon later in the day.

In his confirmation hearings earlier this month, Gates said the United States was not winning in Iraq but withheld his own views of what course to take until he met with US military commanders.

"It's my impression that, frankly, there are no new ideas on Iraq," he said. "The list of options, the list of strategies, the list of approaches is pretty much laid down.

"And the question is: Is there a way to put pieces of those different proposals together in a way that provides a path forward?"

Gates is a former member of a blue ribbon panel that recommended the withdrawal of most US combat troops by early 2008 as security responsibilities are rapidly shifted to Iraqis assisted by US advisers. AFP

Deadly Gaza gun battle threatens fragile truce

GAZA CITY—ISRAELI SOLDIERS shot dead by Hamas in Gaza City on Tuesday, threatening a fragile truce aimed at halting an increasingly violent power struggle between rival Palestinian factions.

At least four policemen were killed and 132 others injured in the latest wave of armed clashes in the impoverished Gaza Strip between supporters of the ruling Islamist movement and the rival Fatah party.

Ismail Abu al-Shaer, 22, was the sixth person killed in a wave of violence since Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas called Saturday for early elections, a move the Hamas-controlled government has denounced as unconstitutional coup.

Shaer was shot dead in a firefight at a hospital in Gaza, where staff said Hamas gunmen were firing from inside the building as an army jeep and armored patrol outside.

"A group of the intelligence service which was surrounding the hospital fired a number of anti-tank rockets towards the (Hamas) base, killing the martyr (Shaer)," Hamas's military wing Ezzedine al-Qassam said in a statement.

Clashes also erupted between Hamas and Fatah loyalists near intelligence service headquarters in northern Gaza City, security sources and witnesses said.

According to security sources, the Hamas have captured a commander of the intelligence services.

Elsewhere in Gaza, armed Hamas militants in black hoods and Islamic green headbands were seen manning the streets while crowds of mourners gathered for the funeral of a member of the Fatah-dominated security services.

However, efforts to contain the violence and prevent a chaotic descent into civil war were gathering pace on Tuesday.

Hamas prime minister Ismail Haniya is to deliver an address in which aides said he would appeal for calm, while the head of the Organization of the Islamic Conference Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu is set to meet both Abbas and Haniya.

"Hamas will not encourage escalation but on the contrary will urge a return to calm and for an end to the crisis," his political adviser Ahmed Yusuf said. AFP

WHAT'S INSIDE
- Asistio gains top seeding; Bihat up /A30

SPORTS
Editor Teddyric S. Melendres

Olympic gold over SEAG victory

By Jane Manaois and Marc Anthony Reyes

THE QUEST FOR THE COUNTRY'S first Olympic gold will take precedence over the defense of the Southeast Asian Games overall championship.

Given orders by no less than President Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday, Philippine Sports Commission chair Pilipinas "Butch" Ramirez started charting the course of local sports toward the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

Not that the PSC, as the government agency tasked with funding athletes' training, would degrade the RP campaign in next year's Southeast Asian Games in Thailand, but Ramirez believes that snaring the first Olympic gold should be given more weight.

"We will go to the SEA Games to defend our title," said Ramirez, after the President gave him a "vote of confidence" to stay on as the government's sports czar in Malacañang yesterday.

"The search for that elusive Olympic gold, however, will be the main objective."

Ramirez went to the Palace with the 18 athletes who won four gold, six silver and nine bronze medals in the recent Asian Games in Doha, Qatar.

The medal haul was the country's biggest since the Jakarta Asiad in 1962, when the late Diosdado Macapagal, Mrs. Arroyo's father, was the country's Chief Executive.

The athletes received checks for P115 million, the sum of their bonus incentives for winning medals.

PRESIDENT Arroyo congratulates Asian Games silver medalist Antonio Tarosa as other medalist Jeff De Luna looks on during the ceremony at Malacañang. EDWIN BACASMAS

Ramirez said the PSC and the Philippine Olympic Committee will already the spare where the athletes have the biggest probabilities of landing Olympic medals.

He also said he would join First Gentleman Jose Miguel "Mike" Arroyo and POC president Jose "Peping" Cojuangco on a trip to China early next month "to establish rapport" with the country's sports officials.

China, according to Ramirez, will become the "home base" of athletes in diving and boxing.

Ramirez said the PSC and the POC will fund the training of athletes in taekwondo and archery in South Korea, karatedos in Italy and equestrian riders in Europe. Boxing will have a new Cuban coach.

Boxing's Violito Payla and Joan Tipan captured a gold each, while the taekwondo jins struck for two silver and three bronze medals.

Ramirez: I have fresh mandate

By Marc Anthony Reyes

AFTER ANNOUNCING HE WOULD STEP DOWN AS chair of the Philippine Sports Commission at the end of the Doha Asian Games, Pilipinas "Butch" Ramirez made a U-turn yesterday.

Ramirez had reason to: President Macapagal-Arroyo wants the PSC to spearhead the drive to win the country's first Olympic gold in the 2008 Beijing Games.

"In a sense, I was given a fresh mandate," he said, after accompanying the country's Asian Games medalists to Malacañang yesterday.

Ramirez said he considered this, the sports czar to prepare the athletes for Beijing as a vote of confidence.

"Today (day) tayo sa Olympics (Will push ahead with the Olympic quest for gold)," the President told Ramirez in front of the athletes, led by medal gold medalists Violito Payla and Joan Tipan.

When Ramirez replied, "Sir sir/sa, I will continue to serve you," the President told him, "Sir."

Ramirez went on to discuss with the President a "shock-emerge" plan to win the elusive Olympic gold.

"Gusto ko sana that the President is committed and forward-as-winning the Olympic gold," he said. "My duty to help achieve that starts again today."

Paragua, Dimakiling, 7 others lead Pichay chess

Standings after two rounds:

1 B Paragua – GM, Philippines, 2 Dimakiling, E. Layla, 3 Balinas, M. Jo, 4 Perez, M. Diaz, J. Jayme, 6 Antilag, G. Gabriel, 7 B—9 Al-Kuwari, M. Salem, Tchetnia, D. Ramon, 10 Bote, R. Legaspi, 11 Nabor, R. Bacud, 12 Sinquian, J. de Ramos, B. Sante, 13 Cua, C. Arana, A. Manzano, L. Reyes, C. Santos, 14 Supervalan, S. Bakalia, 15 Aurora

DIMAKIMATE: MARK PARAGUA and GM candidate Oliver Dimakiling handled their respective rivals to share the lead with seven others after the second round of 2nd Bgy. Pesquera "Bench" Pichay Jr. Cup National Open and Chess Challenge yesterday at SM City in Olongapo.

Paragua, the tournament's top seed with an Elo rating of 2697, defeated Felix Master Adriano Bacala, while the second-ranked Dimakiling, 27, took the measure of Reddit's Rooster of Colombia City.

Paragua and Dimakiling shared the lead with third seed International Master Darwin Laylo, Sr., 6 GM Nelson Mariano B. Sr., 11 IM Wesley So, Sr., 13 IM Petronio Roca, Sr., 20 FIDE John Paul Gomez, Sr., 19 FIDE Mikhael Magsa and No. 23 National Master Harley Gading.

"Magsabi 'yung game namin (Our game was rough-n-rolls," said the 22-year-old Paragua, who beat 10-no Balbero in the opening round on Monday. "Medyo complicated pero napilit ko lamang sa kanding had. It was complicated but I managed to squeeze the win in the endgames."

Dimakiling said he benefited from coaching Laylo, IM Ronald Dableo and Jerdava Overosa, in the recent Doha Asian Games.

"Yung preparation ko sa kanila, nagamit ko kay Garcia sa (I used the preparations I devised for them in—the) first round," said Dimakiling, who defeated with so easy-win over Benjamin Garcia III.

Seventh seed IM Jayson Gonzales bounced back from a nine-ring first-round defeat to NM Arjan Cabe with a win over Nineteen NM Daley Rivera.

The winner of the six-day event hosted and sponsored by Pichay, president of the National Chess Federation of the Philippines, will receive P300,000. *Marlon Bernardino, contributor*

MARK PARAGUA

SPORTSWATCH

Santos regains crown

AT 9:30 AM (MEDNES. 19 DEC. 31ST, 2016) AND 2016 Abraham Santos regained his throne in this year's 21st Ayuna Challenge last Sunday at the University of the Philippines in Diliman City. The 20-year-old Santos, a national fifth-Elevation veteran from Caloocan in City, led from start to finish to clocking 45 minutes and 37 seconds and overtaking the two-time engineer' MPPMP Company of the Senior City Fire Department. Enrique placed second in 47:22.38 – beat by Jonathan Yuang (45:48). Completing the top 10 overall are Gracious Santos (45:56), Roberto Mendoza (45:40), Andy Pangan (46:04), Jeremy Ramos (46:27), Ryan Dimaculangan (46:28), Francis Ledesma (46:43), and Benjamin Tendero (46:48). In the skirt race, Rolando Anna Whitehouse, managing director of Intel-Philippines, won with a time 46:24. She was followed by Gabrielle Gaje (46:42) and Imelda Jao (46:58). Included in the top ten women race finishers were Valerie Santelices (7:08:20), Christina Santos (7:04:20), Analiza Dorotan (7:06:46), Mica Anne Regalado (7:13:48), Kristine Bacosa (7:13:21), and Kiara Cabrera (7:14:29). Runner-president Alberto Severino, Dr. Clifford Javier and engineer Edith Bongar also beat Mayor Paul, a Bicolano Senior College of St. Benilde, and Blackrim Corp., treasurers Romina Macaraeg, who emerged champions in the men's and women's five-kilometer side-event.

Yonco-Sunrise Tour

THE YONCO-SUNRISE TOUR MOVES TO THE south as the Pamook Badminton Center in Cebu City host the second stage of the 19-stop circuit on Jan. 28-29. Organizing association also announced this week from Guam under registrations to receive full setting as leading of participants in the two-week for boys and girls doubles, singles and mixed doubles as well as a men-category to run on Jan. 6-7 and 11-12. Other provinces expected to host the Tour are Cagayan Santos City (Oct. 23-25), Iloilo City, Bacolod City, General Santos and Manila. Interested parties may log on to the tournament website and download the entry forms and email them to tournament_registration@gmail.com or contact them to Nonette Bautista-Cledor.

Bata co-leads Rambutan

WITH MORE THAN SEVEN TIMES THE SIZE OF THE SAP the Rambutan Sports Complex in Pasig City is a world-class facility started 7 a.m. today at the San Juan Gymnasium. From 7 to participants. 12 local live race-with three-time each, among them Sam Mendoza, Gov. Ito Franco, Patrick Antonio, Don "Sato" Reyes, Mark Garcia, Raymond Legarda, Arman Santos, Dean Jones and Bobby Rhodes. Applicants and contact Dan Dimaculangan gifts will be raffled off to paying patrons, said host and SAP owner S. Pineda. Likewise, refreshments convenient live bands and coolers of the free buffet at the Rambutan. "This is the first time that a cooked race has been held at the Rambutan Complex. I'm sure the participants will enjoy," Pineda said. Call 570-1005 and 570-4502.

Fastest Win at PCC

PASAY CITY COMMUNITY SWIMMING AWARDS, behind Mrs. Sim Cook Mahar gets underway at 7 a.m. today with over 200 triathlon runners and handicapped enthusiasts gunning for the guaranteed prize of P200,000. PTI manager Rodney Dizon said that the hosted with champion and master P40,000 and a TV, microwave oven, fourth, P10,000 and electric pot, fifth, P5,000, and electric pot. Likewise, all winners will receive special prizes for finishing marathon, triathlon, one-sixth of the race. To free breakfast will be served throughout it, according to Dizon. The first 25 runners will also receive special prizes. Call 843-1888, 843-1216, and 810-6116.

GCAP series Dec. 27

THE COCKPIT of "GOLDEN COCKEYS: Association of the Philippines (GCAP) starts at San Juan Coliseum on Dec. 27 via the big-time's week derby. Ten stables will be represented by GCAP for the 2016-2017 cock season: Dizon schedules, Jan. 15 and 29; Feb. 19; March 5; and 26; April 11; May 7, 18 and 30. Entries for GCAP Cockpit Derby, Inc. Interested parties may also join GCAP derbies for a discounted entry fee of P15,000. Regular members' entry fee is P25,000. GCAP members include Gary Barnes, Rudy Alvarez, Patrick Antonio, Eric dela Rosa, and Jerry and Lawrence Aragon Brothers, Martinez-Javier Brothers, the Briones, Rep. Didi Cruz, Raoul Bravo, Ruby Gutierrez, Tony Marfori, Mayor Bobby Guevara, Butch Bautista, Mayor Dennis Pineda, Louie Cua, Otto Ballesteros, Mike and Bernard Rivera, Jack Wu Cruz, Bengal Alonzo, Pat Fernandez, Toby Herrada and Ronny Cadiz.

MARCY Arellano blocks Kim Fajarnes's shot during their game yesterday

Sista trips TeleTech; Sparks win

By Jasmine W. Payo

TURNING TO KELLYN GREGORIO AND MARCY ARELLANO IS PART becoming a habit for blocked blitz.

The Super Smokers finished on the fingertips of Gregorio and Arellano as the Sista period to dunn the cold lead with a 77-69 victory over the TeleTech Titans in the PBL Bilou Cup yesterday at the Ultimate Gilligan Sports Center.

Gregorio hustled the Smokers' fourth-quarter run to finish with a game-high 19 points.

Arellano also drilled in 15 points, including six straight in the last two minutes that pushed the gap to 73-64, sealing the lead over a fifth win in eight starts.

In claiming the top spot at 6-2, coach Cabo Garcia also gave credit to his backup players.

"If you look at the team, they're really a bunch of role players," said Garcia. "They support each other, maybe not in scoring but definitely."

The Smokers' victory ended the three-game winning run of the Titans, who fell to a 4-3 slate.

Regina Ordiz also bounced on three top runs garnered to forge a 90-81 triumph over Philippine Air Cornets in the second game.

Marvin Cruz and Derrick Luba-

SPORTSWATCH

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PBL showcases stalwarts' flair

THE PHILIPPINE BASKETBALL LEAGUE DISplays the athleticism, grace and flair of the country's future basketball stars today at the Ultimate Sports Center in Steinhauer City.

A stars dusk contest pitting the four Cousin's JC Intal and Edwin Asoro against the league's new talents Ian Sangalang and Paul Lee will highlight the event billed as the Unity Cup Showcase.

A three-point shootout and an obstacle challenge are also scheduled in the showcase, the PBL's Christmas present to local fans, which will be held right after the 2pm main basketball action between Centro and Cebuana Distiller-Pera Dalada.

Known for their aerial acrobatics, the 6-foot-4 Intal and 6-3 Asoro are considered favorites to win the dunk contest which will also feature Rookies of Tomorrow Jeo Vey Guevarra, Hershel Alano's Stan Abbott, Magnolia's Gio Mono and Hapee PCU's Lemuel Navarro and Ian Garrido.

Unlike GMA, Pacman could spur change

BARE EYE

Rheuel Trinidad

THIS IS NOT LAS VEGAS AND YOUR credit card is not at stake. But let's try to place a bet on Manny Pacquiao.

No, not against fifth Member, Mario Antonio Barrera or that hairless pet-lizard boxing "free wonder" Edwin Valero.

At stake: Sir Manny Pacquiao, 28, against himself.

Or, to put it more urgently: Pacquiao vs the Philippines.

Can Pacquiao be an effective agent for the sought-after character change?

* * *

Let's make a little gamble.

Try to determine Pacquiao's immense impact and influence on the entire Filipino mood.

Wanna bet? Majority of Pinoys would step, look and listen if Pacquiao, one of these days, used the pulpit and told poor, hard-pressed Pinoy they should start behaving properly like law-abiding citizens.

Look, the Church has made the initial call for national character reformation.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo naturally moved away from the line of fire by administratively agreeing with what the Church had to prescribe for the Filipino soul.

* * *

Of course, the nose snoots were flashed on the front pages, played up repetitively all media outlets, including the most marketplace gossipmills.

Sorry, but yesterday the situation—the screaming scramble out in our chaotic streets—was worse than last week's.

People, at least the road most majority, have obviously lost the sense of what's right and what's wrong.

It is blindly and selfishly so each-for-own.

* * *

The Smith to Bal, Simbulan to Cardinal Sandoz, Archbishop of Manila, had to be rushed back to the hospital after suffering a relapse in removing their urgent need for national reformation and there at the Luneta on Sunday.

Anyway, our dear Cardinal need not be told that his call has again fallen on plugged ears.

Mrs. Arroyo, meanwhile, went her merry, old way and hiked Filipino mendicants in the Doha Asian Games, sending across the message everything was fine in her province-ing, badly battered republic.

* * *

How this is not to say that the heart Manny Pacquiao has become more impervious than the Church.

No, but, at the perilous point, the national losing hero could, indeed, provide the great difference.

Pacquiao, pantomime, could be a lot more relevant and useful than Malacañang and all the useless enthusiasts put together in redeeming solid Filipino ways and restoring order in our streets, in the national life as a whole.

Pinoy Time reporters would easily let his fist having allowed himself to be carried away.

Please, hold it. He's actually made random surveys, out there in the streets, among the low and the endowed daily wage-earners.

The reply: Why not? Pacquiao could yet help open eyes to order, selflessness and better, healthy habits.

* * *

Themselves speaking, the more concerned citizens suggested that Pacquiao could be made to do extraordinary.

You know, just like what he has succeeded in doing for myriad of products—from fried chicken to pants, everything—Pacquiao should be able to call prospect major-of-leisure to the cleanery.

This could, repeat, sound wild and cheapen it even-less motives.

Just with practically everything falling into places out there in assorted boulevards and side alleys, there should be no harm in trying.

"That's a step in the right direction. We can't go wrong with Manny Pacquiao. Count me in, please," said four-year-old Jose Rafael, founding son-gun of the World Boxing Council.

* * *

Who knows? The first steps to national reformation could be just around the corner, right under your nose.

Pacquiao could, for example be making a couple of inquiries on the garbage one—again.

Of course, the call is for our leaders, mainly pro-administration lawmakers that had again proven to be a caliber. Or disaster, to honestly do their assigned duties, with no love or favor.

Pacquiao had said it. He was happy enough in leaving inside Filipinos hopes and animal even for just a day ("Mangyan na ko, mapalipayan ko ala kahit sandali man lamang").

Didn't Pacquiao shame the world the Filipino's capacity to bring the whole by agreed-for-light Erik Morales on a night he was gravely ill last month?

If he could make them buy acid-based vinegar, as thought this were real and authentic, there's no way Pacquiao could not wash the gulf and guide lost citizens back to right, human ways.

WHO WON IT: Dominican champion Jean Sazmon (right) connects with a right against his UF-challenger Antonio Osorio during the 11th round of their scheduled 12-round WBO lightweight match in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, Monday. Guzman won by a decision.

Parker clinches ₱1-M poker prize

A RAE CALL BEFORE THE TURN TURNED OUT to be the clincher for Chris Parker of Australia in the exciting finale of the Philippine Poker Tour-Million Dino-Solaire Philippine Championship at the Casino Filipino in Parañaque.

With an A-4 and 8 against the King and Jack of opponent Ed Bautista, Parker called the big blind of Bautista and raised the pot to P200,000 after the flop.

The flop was Ten of A and K, giving Bautista an over-bettor hand with the highest pair on board. Bautista re-raised to P400,000 and Parker called.

There came another 8 at the turn.

Parker, ahead by P600,000 at that point, went all-in and Bautista, thinking his opponent was bluffing, accepted the challenge.

The river produced nothing, giving Parker the title, the P1-million top prize and the champion's bracelet.

Bautista, younger cousin of the event's inaugural winner, Derek Bautista, was the chip leader after the first cut-off with more than half-million, or nearly 12 percent of the chips.

A sub-par performance in the Last 16 dropped him to 16th heading into the final table.

"Saying, 'Medyo nahirapan ang Filipino sa Philippine Poker Tour,'" the champion's post-victory tweet for the P250,000 runner-up prize.

His uncle Chris Bautista, incidentally, also made it to the final table.

Benny Pantilin and two-time Boxing Hall of Famer Gerry Peñalosa also finished third and fourth, respectively, and received P200,000 and P125,000.

Indian runner fails Asiad gender test

NEW DELHI, INDIA—AN INDIAN RUNNER who won a silver medal for the women's 800 meters at the Asian Games failed a gender test and was stripped of the medal.

Shanti Soundarajan, 23, took the gold in Doha, Qatar, after placing second.

The Indian Olympic Association said Monday it has been told by the Olympic Council of Asia that the 25-year-old runner was disqualified for failing a test.

"IOA has asked the Athletics Federation of India to return the medal as desired by the Olympic Council of Asia," the Indian Olympic group said.

The IOA also asked to medical commission to inquire into Soundarajan's case and report within 30 days.

There are no compulsory gender tests during events sanctioned by the International Association of Athletics Federations, but athletes may be asked to take a gender test.

The medical evaluation panel usually includes a gynecologist, endocrinologist, psychologist and internal medicine specialist.

An Indian athletics official who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the media said Soundarajan almost certainly never had sex-change surgery.

Instead, the official said Soundarajan appeared to have "abnormal chromosomes." The official also said the test revealed more Y chromosomes than of female.

Soundarajan was not immediately available for comment.

AP

SOUNDARAJAN

Thomas a 'despicable jerk,' says angry Karl

NEW YORK—DENVER GOT THE BRUNT OF the suspensions handed out Monday by the NBA, but Nuggets coach George Karl left no doubt who he thought responsible.

Namely, Knicks coach Isiah Thomas, who escaped without punishment.

Karl unleashed a verbal assault on Thomas, accusing an already bad relationship.

"In my mind it was premeditated, it was fostered by Isiah," Karl said Monday at the Pepsi Center in Denver speaking about the fight between the Nuggets and Knicks on Saturday night that was sparked by a hard foul committed against Nuggets guard J.R. Smith with 2:33 left.

Karl believed Thomas ordered the foul because of frustration that Denver's starters were still in the game with the Nuggets up big.

Karl called Thomas's actions "despicable" and called Thomas several expletives. He added, "He needs a bad situation worse. He's a jerk, but what he's trying to do. I mean, I have a basketball

THOMAS

team that's learning to win, and learning to win on the road, and my team has blown 20-point leads, 11-point leads with one minute to go, and I watched Utah blow a 13-point lead to Sacramento two nights before with four minutes to go in the game, and you're telling me that I'm running the score up? He should be held accountable for what his actions are."

After the Knicks held their morning shootaround, Thomas took his shots at Karl, however.

"I can't speak for him, but he put his players in a tough position," Thomas said. "I think he put his players in a very bad position."

He was not suspended or fined by Stern, though Thomas appeared to be caught on video during the game scorning Nuggets star Carmelo Anthony not to go in the huddle or he would be fined/fined.

Thomas said Karl later had an ongoing beef stemming from Thomas' treatment of Larry Brown, Karl's close friend.

Earlier this season, the Knicks beat the Nuggets 109-107 after Denver had a five-point lead with 5:22 to play.

In the Knicks' shootaround, Thomas said he did not threaten Anthony.

"I didn't warn him," Thomas said. "At that point in time in the game, he and Sinema [Cassell] were in the game. I said to those guys, 'This isn't the way you should act. This isn't the way you should be.' I was not threatening it [a foul]. But it wasn't a threat, it was more or less, 'This isn't how you do it.'"

Knicks players backed him up. Center Eddy Curry said the Nuggets were against the league's "unwritten rules."

AP Sports Service

STEPHON Marbury of the New York Knicks drives hard against the Utah Jazz.

NBA chief gets stern

Slaps 47-game suspension, $1-M fine for one-minute New York brawl

NEW YORK—MIKE DUNLEAVY Jr. and Carmelo Anthony may succeeded for 25 games and six other players were penalized on Monday, two days after the brawl between the Denver Nuggets and New York Knicks.

Stan Robinson and Al Smith each were suspended for 10 games, and four other players also were banned.

League commissioner David Stern fined each organization $500,000, but there was no separate penalty for Knicks coach Isiah Thomas, who had accused Anthony not to dribble into the final horn before the melee started at Madison Square Garden.

The NBA said its players engaged in a game of extraordinary skill, athleticism and grace, and, for good or bad, set an example for the entire basketball world, on and off the court," Stern said in a statement.

Anthony's suspension was the sixth longest in NBA history. Randy Gillen, whose hard foul on Smith sparked the fighting, was suspended for six games and Knicks teammate Jared Jeffries will miss four. Also, the Knicks' Jerome James and Denver's Steve Blake were penalized for one game for leaving the bench area during the chaos.

Ten players were ejected after the fight, which started with 1:17 left in Denver's 123-109 victory. It was the NBA's stormiest scene since the brawl between Indiana Pacers players and Pistons fans in Detroit six years ago.

Stern said the fines to the organizations were appropriate, since he was not out about cleaning up the game.

"It's a more general message than I'm going to start holding our teams accountable," Stern said.

Gillen provoked Smith from across basket by grabbing him by the neck and pushing him to the floor. Smith rose and immediately challenged Gillen, and Robinson jumped to expel Smith's away. Anthony shoved Robinson away, and Robinson and Smith then tumbled into the front-row white fighting.

Just as things appeared to be calming, Anthony threw a hard punch that floored Gillen, and New York's Jared Jeffries sprinted from the baseline toward halfcourt to an effort to get at Anthony, but was tackled by a Denver player.

By the time security had finally contained Smith, they were nearly at the opposite end of the court from where the fighting started.

"I was very disappointed," Stern said. "Clearly, we're not getting through to players in certain circumstances. Just don't want to be restrained; I would suggest that those players will not have long careers in the NBA."

There was speculation Thomas would be punished for his comments on Anthony. Stern acknowledged hearing about it, but said he relied only on "definitive information" when handing out punishments.

Stern made it clear he was annoyed by comments from Thomas, who didn't back away on Monday from the Knicks' pregame assertion that some of the problems were caused by Denver coach George Karl lowering his starters on the floor too long in a blowout.

"I can't speak for Stan, but he put his players in a tough position," Thomas said. "I think he put his players in a very bad position."

Karl accused Thomas of a "premeditated" act, underscoring the disgust with the New York coach with expletives.

"It was directed by Isiah," he said. "I think his actions after the game were despicable. He made a bad situation worse. He wrote on my children's Myspace. I never thought about running up the score. I wanted to get a big win on the road.

"My team has had trouble holding leads at the end of games," he added. "I didn't want the score to get under 10 points because if it would've gotten under 10 points it would've had negative feelings in my mind."

Karl has bigger problems now: he'll be without Anthony until Jan. 20, and Smith will be gone until Jan. 8. The duo combines for more than 40 points a game.

AP

Depleted Knicks, Nuggets find ways to win

NEW YORK—STEPHON MARBURY'S layup just beat the buzzer, and gave the underestimated New York Knicks a stunning 97-96 overdone victory over the Utah Jazz in the NBA on Thursday.

Two nights after a brawl with the Denver Nuggets that led to 10 ejections, New York...down to eight players because of suspensions and injuries...showed the right kind of fight. The Knicks bounced back from a dismal first quarter and knocked off the Northwest Division leaders.

Marbury had 29 points and eight assists and Jared Cassell added 16 points...all after halftime—and the Knicks found a way to win despite making only two field goals in the final eight minutes of regulation as the Jazz missed their chance to win.

Deron Williams scored 23 points for Utah, including a jumper that gave the Jazz a 96-95 lead with 2 seconds left. But Darrell Lee found Marbury streaking up the left side with his lob towards pass, and Marbury made a layup that was ruled good after a review by the officials.

At Denver, the home team didn't need its regulars to score against Washington.

Playing without Carmelo Anthony and Al Smith, coming 13 and 14-game suspensions respectively, the Nuggets blew an early 25-point lead but held on for a 117-106 victory over the Wizards.

Anthony, Smith and Nene were all suspended earlier in the day for their roles in a bench-clearing New York-Denver brawl.

At East Rutherford, New Jersey, Jason Kidd recorded his 61st career triple-double and Nenad Krstic had 16 points for the Nets, who tripped the Golden State Warriors, 126-97.

Todd Szubert with 18 points, 12 assists and 11 rebounds and the Nets won for the fifth time in 16 games. The triple-double was the ninth of the season for the Nets point guard.

AP

COMPLETE NBA SCORES

COACH George Karl leads a dejected Denver five into the court.

Even in victory, Tiger haunted by tears, failure

THOUSAND OAKS, CALIFORNIA—Tiger Woods' great run has narrowed up in a series of snapshots on the 18th green at Royal Liverpool. One minute he thrusts both arms in the air after winning the British Open, the next he sobbed on the shoulder of his caddie.

Even now, Woods has a hard time sounding like most meaningful moment of 2006, his first victory since his father died of cancer. He has won majors, but only until he taps in for par on the 8-foot hole.

Right before the team went to Ryder Woods took off the tape.

"I slap your leg," he said to an interviewer over the weekend. "You have to watch it."

Woods ran final success in the record books—eight US PGA Tour victories, including one in a row, two of three majors. He found love in his father's grave in May.

If there was ever a time athlete would get Player of the Year and Comeback Player of the Year, this might be it.

The first half was a blur.

Despite winning his first two starts, Woods ended on others' failures, whether it was Jose Maria Olazabal missing a 6-foot putt to go playoff at Torrey Pines or Ernie Els having time the water to a playoff at Bethpage.

In Doral, Woods seem to the ties Phil Mickelson's.

But as his father's condition got worse, so did Woods' game.

Even though he suffered two career majors to run his career total to 12, it's the final round of the Masters, where he finished three shots behind Phil Mickelson, that sticks with him.

"That's something I still continue to think about, even to this day," Woods said. "It was my last round that my Dad ever watched me play. Knowing that going into it, if I could have given him one last shot, some positive memories before he goes, it would have been huge."

It was the first time Earl Woods did not make the trip to Augusta, and Woods believed there is would be the last time his father would watch him on TV in a major.

"It was the only time I saw him cry put hard," rabbi Steve Williams later said.

When he won the American Express Championship in October for his sixth straight US tour victory, a British TV reporter asked Woods how he would remember his year. Woods didn't hesitate in saying, "a loss."

WOODS

The unbeaten run to his father. What would things around was three hours on Thursday afternoon outside Chicago.

He had missed the cut for the first time in a major at the US Open, and it wasn't really close. He missed a record of 35-35 to his first tournament back after taking nine weeks off because of his father's death.

His next round was a preliminary 72 at the Western Open that left him in danger of winning another run. His assistant coach Hank Haney to the range at Cog Hill, and they went back to the basics.

"I said, 'Let's forget everything, that's happened. Let's work on what we did at the beginning of the year that won the first two events, and let's get everything organized,'" Haney recalled.

"No other practice session was more important than that one."

Putting his best shot of the year is never easy. Woods goes back to the range at the Western Open.

"There were a series of shots, but they weren't as ominous," he said. "It was a practice session. I had at the Western when I hit balls about three times and thought, 'Wow, that's right.' I just built upon that for the rest of the year."

The rest of the year was as good as he ever has played. Woods not only made the cut in Chicago, he tied for second, two shots behind Trevor Immelman. It took another two months and six events before he played a four-consecutive without going home with a trophy.

Since winning the cut at Whistling Pines, Woods has not finished worse than second in stroke play.

"He's winning 55 percent of the tournaments he plays," Stan Utley said. "He's probably ahead of Hogan's first three percentage."

Woods' breakneck might always be 2000, when he won nine times, including three straight majors, and completed the career Grand Slam at age 24. Woods says that moment may be better, considering what he's dealt with the years.

It was a year of big wins and enormous losses, a measure earlier between joy and sadness, all of which was captured at Royal Liverpool.

"I don't know if there's a highlight, an emotion driven and crying," Woods said within a day.

But relevant?

"Without a doubt," he said.

AP

Ozamiz draws first blood vs Spring cagers

SUGAR CITY—BACK TO BACK TITLIST OZAmiz Cobra drew first blood in its best-of-three championship series with Spring Sagayray Monday night by scoring a thin 73-70 victory in the 2006 Spring Cooking Oil-NBC National Cup basketball tournament at the MSU-IIT gym here.

Last conference's MVP Marlon Bauzo, Sinor Dacua and three other Cobra Clarise cagers scored in double figures to turn back the gutsy Cooking Oil Masters of NBC president Ferdinand "Ito" Pedilla and league MVP Mike "Cyrus" Cortez after collecting 18, 17 and 15-14 in the second and third quarters.

Bauzo sparkled with 14 points, Dacua added 12 and PBL veteran Leo Gacumbal, Lee Barug and Elbert Alfonso chipped in 10 apiece as Master Reynaldo Pantaleon's Ozamiz Cobblers moved a win away from recording MSU's first three-peat.

Sinor Speedsolan led Spring Sagayray with a game-high 18 points.

Game 2 is scheduled today at the Gen. Angel Medina St. gym in Iligan City.

Ozamiz surged to a 20-12 first quarter lead, but Spring Sagayray stopped for 25 points in the second quarter to lead 37-35 at the half.

SPORTS

Asistio gains top seeding; Bibat up

By Mycong B. Cuerdo

CANJURADA, LAGUNA—TOMLITE ARETHA, the talented teenager who was dropped from the national pool earlier in the year, fired a two-under-par 70 yesterday to bag top seeding in the men's division of the 2006 All-Amateurs at The Country Club here.

Aretha gained in a 36-54 card built around three birdies and a bogey to wind a lead 144 for the 36-hole classification and drive No. 22 Joel Ojarco (83-75H) to the start of matchplay today.

Past round leaders Ivy Bajo (a struggled to a 74 and finished with the No. 3 ranking after winding up with a 146, colliding with Asian Games teammate Gene Boardio in the other half of the draw.

Boardio finished with a 153 tally after a 10-for-24 at open event on Michael Allan, the individual bronze medal winner in Doha, Qatar, finished in 14th spot after surrendering a 71 to matchplay.

Bibat, the tall and lanky stalwart of Southwoods in the PBA franchise, got off among and never looked back, finishing with a 154 tally to make the match playstage.

Louie Oscadan fired a 75-to-finish third with a 148 and ease a clash with No. 30 qualifier Kim Chung-kui, the Philippine-based Korean who has campaigned in many local amateur events. Kim fired a second round 66 for 137 and 36th place.

Other notables who advanced were National Caddies' open products Mark Fernando (76-75-151), Rufino Bejasa (78-73-151), Mario Labajo (2006-79-154) and Jessel Abalos (72-to-69-150), and former Caribbean Open winner Roel Sangalang (74th-77-151).

The top two seeds in the ladies' division belonged to youngsters Mia Pickle and Crystal Espeed, who scorned in a 75 and 73, respectively.

Only 16 advanced in the distaff side, with Asian Games teammates Dottie Ardina and Cyra Rodriguez drawing each other in the first round.

The world junior champ Ardina posted a second round 77 and finished 10th with a 150 tally, while Rodriguez was screened after a 72 for 153.

Pickle, who lost to Frances Bondoc, 3&2 in the 36-hole finals at the Manapuo in Baesbal last year, turned in a 145 aggregate and will collide with shooter Ting Ting Cano, the 18th player in the going who carried a lone 4-over 148.

The biggest casualty in the ladies' side was Jaclene de Villa, the reigning medal play RP Ladies' champion who skied to a 91 and failed to advance after a 174, 12 strokes off the last place.

Former RP Ladies' Open champion Carmelita Villanueva snatched par 71 for a 146 finishing to fourth to seal a duel with Paulina Bulin, who had an 80 and a 150 to 13thplace.

Anya Tampinco, the Bilad Duke entries in the field, wound up 40th with two 76s for a 152 and will be paired with Aura Roberto, who had two 76s for a 152.

Regina de Guzman (77-153) and Bandoo duo Jay (76-153)—these each other in the match play by finishing eighth and ninth, respectively.

PBA Picks studies her line of putt on hole No. 4.

Things out of control, says Guiao

By Francis Delma

ALL DOE HAS TO DO IS LISTEN TO COACH Yeng Guiao and know that things can't get any closer than this in the Talk 'N Text PBA Philippine Cup.

"We're trying to keep our semis hopes alive because things are no longer in our control," admitted coach Yeng Guiao after Red Bull's crucial victory over Purefoods.

This from a guy whose team is at third place, one game out of the No. 2 spot, which is the outright semifinal ticket, and just a game and a half behind the No. 1 team.

Even coach Jong Uichico, the think tank of the league-leading Barangay Ginebra, refuses to acknowledge Chotsing are outright shot, saying all he is looking for is to punch whatever holes his team might still have.

"We just want to get better every game," said the low-key mentor.

And next to talk down to title No. 1 Barangay Ginebra, No. 2 San Miguel and No. 3 Red Bull are now in a very much-better position than the two-outright semifinal berths in the league.

Those two spots afford the team that earns them a chance to skip the wild card phase.

The Kings have managed to keep a hold of the top spot with their 12-4 record, while the Beermen, after routing Talk 'N Text Phone Pals, 114-101, is currently their 11th win in 17 outings-are in second place.

Gin Kings eye semis vs Barako

By Mycong B. Cuerdo

GIFTS ARE GIVEN NOT ONLY ON Christmas, and that season does not necessarily mean the time for being kind in the PBA.

Barangay Ginebra dishes with a determined Red Bull side tonight, shooting for no less than an outright semifinal spot in the Talk 'N Text Philippine Cup that would gift-wrap the team to-date team has shipped.

The 7:30 p.m. game at the Araneta Coliseum in Cubao will be the first of two shots the Gin Kings have in nailing a final four berth, and a win would close the door on the Bandoo and give the ills Beermen a free ride.

"If we can get it Sibelowaday [no, day]... why wait for Christmas day" coach Jong Uichico asked as his Kings wind up their elimination round schedule on Monday against the Talk 'N Text Phone Pals.

SAMES TODAY
(Araneta Coliseum)
9:30 p.m. – Alaska vs Welcoat
7:30 p.m. – Red Bull vs Ginebra

Red Bull is the only other team with a shot at the semis, and a win tonight would not really guarantee Yeng Guiao and his boys of a shot at the best they could do is win 12 games and the Beermen and the Kings could go for 13.

"We don't have full control of our fate, but whatever it is that's in our control, we'll try to keep," said Guiao, who will be assured of an automatic quarterfinal seat if his Bandoo remove the Kings.

Ginebra, which has a 12-4 record, will be coming into the game with its confidence at a high after annihilating Sta. Lucia, 139-99, on Friday.

Ian Miguel, which opened up with a 6-0 record but lost were 11 of its last 14 games since a key trade, can avoid complications of a playoff, granting Red Bull some insight, with a victory over 46-21 on Ovieneon.

Sta. Lucia, which led this tournament for most part until a cynical losing streak solidified out its semifinal chances, debuting Champion Purefoods over the Phone Pals have been left to dog it out for quarterfinal berths.

Three slots are available for that round, and the Phone Pals will drop out of it with a loss to the Kings, while Sta. Lucia and Purefoods can avoid the ouster with victories over Coca-Cola and Alaska, respectively on Friday.

IN THIS ISSUE
■ SMIC to borrow P108 in 1st half /B4
■ Review sought on water firms' profit scheme /B12

BUSINESS
Editor Raul G. Marcelo • Assistant Editor Corrie S. Mariano

Income tax collection falls short of target

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo exchanges pleasantries with Haruhiko Kuroda, president and chair of the board of directors of the Asian Development Bank, during the bank's 40th anniversary celebration held at its headquarters in Ortigas.

BIR blames declining interest rates, fewer T-bill auctions

By Michelle V. Barros

INCOME TAX COLLECTION FROM JANUARY TO OCTOBER FELL short of the official target by 6 percent, slimming the chances of the Bureau of Internal Revenue to hit the full-year tax collection goal set by the national government.

Documents from the BIR showed that income tax collection in the first 10 months of the year reached P108.91 billion as against the P107.99-billion goal for the period.

Income taxes account for 60 percent of the BIR's revenues.

Compared with last year's figures, income tax collection in the first 10 months of this year was up by 16 percent from P263.60 billion.

The year-on-year increase in the collection of income tax was partly attributed to the increase in the corporate income tax rate to 35 percent from 32 percent as provided in the Value-Added Tax Reform Law that took effect in November last year.

The BIR said the target set for this year was too high and there were factors beyond its control that led to the lower-than-expected

SEE BIR, B4

Regional marts weaken on Thai capital controls

By Doris C. Dumlao

THAILAND'S BOLD MOVE TO CURB the baht's sharp appreciation yesterday created ripples in the local financial markets but the fanciful fretting of Filipinos was quick to assure the public that it would not sweat as similar moves restricting capital flows.

In the spot foreign exchange market Philippine trading system, the peso shed 40 centavos to close at 49.72 against the dollar yesterday, reflecting the sell-off across regional currencies following Thailand's tighter capital controls.

The main share Philippine Stock Exchange composite index rose lost 20.12 points to close at 2,049.71 yesterday.

"Country-specific conditions require specific measures. In the case of the Philippines, we believe that a liberal and market-oriented policy stance on capital flows remains appropriate," BSP Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. said.

"Foreign exchange inflows are an important driver of economic growth. We shall ensure the consistency of our policy with this principle," he said.

On Monday night, the Thai central bank unveiled a strategy to discourage the influx of short-term or "hot money" in the local financial system and have speculators keep their money in the country for at least a year. It required 30 percent of non-trade related foreign exchange sold for baht to be deposited interest-free with the central bank for a year.

Investors pulling funds out of Thailand—the epicenter of the 1997 Asian

SEE ALSO, B7

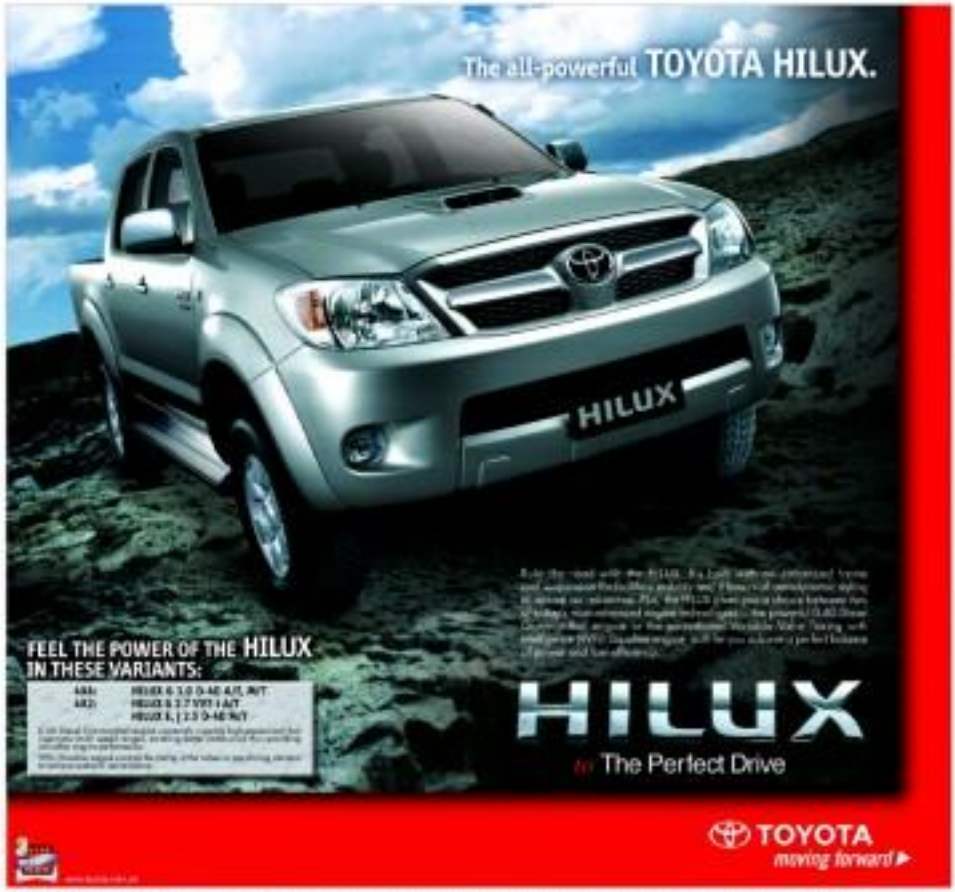
Currencies

49.71 ▼

Stock Market

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX

Shares close lower



Mutual funds still struggling to attract business

Weak distribution, regulations blamed

By Dustin L. Lucas

THE SAVE AND LEARN EQUITY FUND RUN by First Metro Asset Management Inc. (fmam) earned a return of 44.7 percent for its investors over the last year, making it the best performing mutual fund in the local market.

In a sister unit, the Save and Learn Pinoy Income Fund, earned 15.2 percent over the previous year, also making it one of the best performers in its category.

"We are very happy with our performance, and it's mostly selfish," said fmam assistant vice president Edwin Ildefonso. But much more needs to be done in terms of reaching more clients for the company and for the industry as a whole.

Indeed, a cursory examination of mutual funds accredited with the Investment Company Association of the Philippines (icap) show that most outperformed the broad markets where they were invested in.

In other words, an investor would have made more money—on the average—had he deposited his funds with investment management rather than if he invested it himself.

More importantly, none of the investors would have lost had they parked their money in mutual funds over the past year, regardless of which fund they chose.

"Chances are, the investment manager can deliver better returns because of his expertise in the field," icap president Fernando Jose Moreno III said in an interview.

Despite this empirical evidence, however, investors are not flocking to unit investment funds as the local industry association relatively underperformed by international standards.

Proof of this is the fact that assets managed by local mutual funds remain minute relative to the size of the financial system.

Minuscule funds

According to fmam, the country's 11 mutual funds had under management only P65 billion in assets at the end of October.

"Of this amount, P37.1 billion are invested in bond funds," Sison said, noting that this showed that the number of many Filipinos remain distrustful toward "saving" rather than "investing."

This amount pales in comparison with those placed in unit investment trust funds (UITFs), which, at one point earlier this year, stood close to P500 billion.

UITFs are similar to mutual fund investment products sold by banks to clients and pancaked on to costs rather than shares. Because they are bank products, they are subject to regulatory reserve requirements. But almost all risk or return are shouldered by the client.

At present, UITFs, which are actively promoted by the bangko sentral ng Pilipinas and sold through bank branches, are the mainstay of mutual funds.

Even after the "run" on UITFs last summer, the industry still holds about P160 billion in funds...more than double that of mutual funds.

"Our problem really is distribution," said Sison, who also heads BPI Asset Management Inc. "UITFs can be sold through bank branches while our products cannot."

Instead, mutual funds must rely on a network of salesmen—most of whom specialize in selling insurance products—to generate new business.

Even this system has its weakness because these salesmen are more interested in selling insurance products, which usually offer less commissions, than mutual fund products, said Gerpalib Asset Management Corp. general manager Efren L. Cruz.

"On top of that, the salesmen have to be licensed to sell these products, too, and the test for this license is very difficult," he said in an interview.

Distribution woes

Cruz, whose Gerpalib fixed-income products are the best-performing bonds invested in dollar-denominated bonds, says this distribution problem directly hinders the development of the industry.

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SMIC to borrow P10B in H1

Bond float, shares issuance eyed

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

SM INVESTMENTS CORP. (SMIC), THE flagship company of tycoon Henry Sy, is borrowing P10 billion in the first half of next year to finance projects and pay portion of the cost of acquiring additional Equitable PCI Bank stake, company chief financial officer Jose Ma. Loyola reported to Monday night.

He said the amount could be raised through the flotation of long-term bonds or issuance of preferred shares.

Of the P10 billion planned borrowing, about P4 billion will be used to pay to Ansa the second installment for the additional Equitable PCI Bank shares the group bought.

The purchase of all the Equitable PCI Bank shares tendered, including those pledged by pension fund Social Security System, would cost the SM group about P34.49 billion. The SSS had agreed to sell its 20-percent stake in the bank to Ansa in October this has yet to be cleared by the Supreme Court. The SSS voted in favor of a merger between Banco de Oro Universal Bank and Equitable PCIBank.

The two banks announced last November a merger plan that would create the second

SY

biggest bank with assets of P623 billion.

Another P5.15 billion of the borrowings will be used to partially finance projects near Mall of Asia, including SMICs 10-storey building for business process outsourcing (BPO) firms and the 42,000-square meter SMT Convention Center.

Some P2 billion will be spent for the development of the group's restaurant project, called Kanila, in Shanghai, Benagna. The project aims to construct 23 restaurants integrated network of coastal resort communities over 20 to 30 years. The first zone is scheduled for launching in the first quarter of 2007.

SMIC is raising its capital spending next year to P200 billion from P15 billion largely for its tourism and mall projects.

He said SMIC would likely finance 50 percent to 60 percent of next year's projects with dollar-denominated borrowings. He said that one of the P563-billion programmed spending for 2007, P7 billion will be for new malls in Bacolod and Tarlac and the expansion of its Cebu, Batangas and Iloilo malls. P7 billion for the Naraplis, Batangas project, and P3 billion for the expansion of its network of department stores and supermarkets.

Ayala subsidiary earmarks $10M for expansion

ELECTRONICS FIRM INTEGRATED MICRO-electronics Inc. (IMI), a unit of conglomerate Ayala Corp., is setting aside more than $10 million for expansion and improvements of facilities in the Philippines, Singapore and China next year, company senior vice president Maria Rosa Santos said in a briefing yesterday.

IMI has 11 manufacturing plants in Asia Pacific: in China and one in Singapore, Malaysia and North America. In the Philippines, IMI has manufacturing hubs in Laguna and Cavite.

Santos said IMI might set up a new manufacturing facility in Hanoi, Vietnam next year. It is also scouting for a new location for an electronics manufacturing facility in China. These plans, however, are not yet included in the $10-million budget for next year.

IMI president Andres Soriano said he was optimistic that the company would post more than 20 percent growth in earnings this year and a 1.80 percent growth next year, largely due to the contribution of Xpeedy Tech, the company's latest acquisition.

Officials declined to give specific figures.

He said he was hoping the company would grow its sales to $1 billion by 2011 by outsourcing design and product development capabilities, increasing its emerging technologies, strengthening marketing and sales and acquiring electronics manufacturing service companies.

The company last year completed its merger with Singapore-based electronics manufacturing service (EMS) provider Integrated Micro-Electronics Ltd. to create a formidable player in the Asia-Pacific region.

To further strengthen its foothold in international markets, IMI this year forged several marketing alliances with German electronics firm Bosch Rexroth. It also partnered with property-developer Palm Corp. and Ek Sien Development.

Elizabeth L. Sanchez

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Income ...

From page B1

income tax collection.

Internal Revenue Commissioner Jose Mario Buting had stressed that the reduction in the tax volume of treasury bills and bonds issued by the national government and the declining interest rates were adversely affecting income tax collection.

BIR documents showed that of the income tax collection in the first 10 months of this year, P227.03 billion was accounted for by taxes on income from government securities. This was 24 percent short of the P168.6 billion target.

"This is why we were the one to [tell] other group from our target because we have been stressed out in collection," Buting had said. He suggested that the collection target for taxes on income from government securities be transferred to the Bureau of the Treasury (BTr), the agency tasked with issuing treasury bills and bonds.

Buting added that income tax collection was dependent on the economy's performance. As such, if the latter underperformed, revenue growth did not always hit the target. Instead, authorities should make the BIR's target flexible and adjusted upward, owing to the actual economic growth.

The BIR cited the declining interest rate for the actual collection of taxes on income from bank deposits. Taxes on income from bank deposits amounted for P15.9 billion, or 34 percent short of the P24-billion target.

Corporate income tax accounted for P125.6 billion of total first 10 months while individual income tax contributed P107.55 billion.

Philippine Stock Exchange

Currencies

December 19, 2006 Country	Unit	Buy Equivalent	Sell/Ap Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.000	0.000	49.0000
Japan	Yen	0.000	0.000	0.4150
United Kingdom	Pound	0.000	0.000	96.1172
Europe	Euro	0.000	0.000	63.9700
Australia	Dollar	0.000	0.000	38.2000
Canada	Dollar	0.000	0.000	42.0000
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.000	0.000	6.3000
Switzerland	Franc	0.000	0.000	39.0000
South Africa	Rand	0.000	0.000	7.0000
Sweden	Krona	0.000	0.000	6.8000
Singapore	Dollar	0.000	0.000	31.0000
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.000	0.000	13.5000
Thailand	Baht	0.000	0.000	1.2000
Taiwan	Dollar	0.000	0.000	1.5000
Saudi Arabia	Riyal	0.000	0.000	13.0000
Kuwait	Dinar	0.000	0.000	170.0000
Bahrain	Dinar	0.000	0.000	130.0000
Qatar	Riyal	0.000	0.000	13.4000
UAE	Dirham	0.000	0.000	13.3000
Brunei	Dollar	0.000	0.000	30.0000
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000	0.000	0.0050
Korea	Won	0.000	0.000	0.0520
Kuwait	Dinar	0.000	0.000	170.0000
Bahrain	Dinar	0.000	0.000	130.0000
Qatar	Riyal	0.000	0.000	13.4000
UAE	Dirham	0.000	0.000	13.3000
Brunei	Dollar	0.000	0.000	30.0000
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000	0.000	0.0050
Korea	Won	0.000	0.000	0.0520
Kuwait	Dinar	0.000	0.000	170.0000
Bahrain	Dinar	0.000	0.000	130.0000
Qatar	Riyal	0.000	0.000	13.4000
UAE	Dirham	0.000	0.000	13.3000
Brunei	Dollar	0.000	0.000	30.0000
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000	0.000	0.0050
Korea	Won	0.000	0.000	0.0520
Kuwait	Dinar	0.000	0.000	170.0000
Bahrain	Dinar	0.000	0.000	130.0000
Qatar	Riyal	0.000	0.000	13.4000
UAE	Dirham	0.000	0.000	13.3000
Brunei	Dollar	0.000	0.000	30.0000
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000	0.000	0.0050
Korea	Won	0.000	0.000	0.0520

PSALM eyes sale of 50% of Luzon, Visayas assets

Napocor's geothermal, coal-fired assets next in line

By Abigail L. Ho

THE POWER SECTOR ASSETS AND LIABILITIES Management Corp. (PSALM) expects to privatize at least 50 percent of National Power Corp.'s Luzon and Visayas capacities by next year, following the successful sale of three hydropower assets with total capacity of 472 megawatts (MW) in recent months.

In an interview with reporters, PSALM president Myrna Osorio said that...including the sale of the 360-MW Binga hydropower plant last week, the government agency had so far privatized about 15 percent of Napocor's Luzon and Visayas capacities.

A "conservative target" for end-2007, she said, was 30 percent.

"We were advised to keep a conservative target. If we do better, then that will be fine. The 50-percent target is achievable if we settle all the issues," she said.

One such issue, she said, involved the many sales agreement between Napocor and PSEC (Energy Development Corp. for the 110.2-MW Tongonan geothermal power facilities.

If the many sales agreement could be revised out, then PSALM could put one more aggressively the sale of those assets, she said.

Another issue that had to be resolved out, she said, was whether PSALM would sell the two units of the Pulangui plant separately or in one package.

One unit has a capacity of 110.5 MW, while the other has a capacity of 80 MW.

"Selling them separately or together as one package

LBP out to get bigger slice of OFW remittances

Gov't bank to kick off campaign in Singapore, Abu Dhabi

By Christine A. Gaylican

LAND BANK OF THE PHILIPPINES WILL LIKE banks next year on a more aggressive campaign to convert a bigger slice of remittances from overseas Filipino workers to loan.

Land Bank will convert its representative offices in Asia to remittance centers, starting with Singapore and Abu Dhabi, UAE and then expand to Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei, said Land Bank executive vice president Ariston R. Cruz in an interview.

He stated that although remittance centers would mean higher maintenance costs for the bank, the cost would be worth it because of the increasing amount of remittances channeled through the banks.

"Inside from our Singapore branch, we will have a test run of our California branch. There would be more technological enhancements to be put in place," he added.

He said Land Bank would also extend remittance services in Europe, starting in Italy.

Cruz added that Land Bank was in talks with remittance service providers based in Hong Kong, Japan and Taiwan to jumpstart the campaign.

Meanwhile, Land Bank loans to its priority sectors—agriculture and agribusiness projects, micro-enterprises and SME projects—reached P79.6 billion in the last nine months, bank officials yesterday reported.

Land Bank has allocated 70 percent of its total loan portfolio worth P114 billion for its priority sectors from January to September, bank president and CEO Dolfo E. Paco said in a press briefing yesterday, surpassing its 65 percent allocation target for the year.

"The continued expansion of Land Bank's loan portfolio in favor of our priority sectors is proof of our commitment to our mandate of spurring growth in the rural economy, supporting agricultural production and generating jobs in the countryside," Paco noted.

He said that Land Bank lent some P53.3 billion for agriculture-related projects of government-owned and -controlled corporations, up by 91.2 billion from the same period last year.

Land Bank also funded agriculture fall-to-manufacture projects of local government units worth P1.3 billion, P464 million more than the loans it approved last year.

An Announcement to
Philippine AXA Life Insurance Corporation
customers, stakeholders and business partners

We at Philippine AXA Life Insurance Corporation are pleased to announce that PLDT has acquired a total of our shares of stock in our investment in our company. We remain committed to providing continuous value to our customers. We would like to express our gratitude to our customers and various stakeholders groups for their patience and understanding regarding the matter.

Thank you very much.

You may contact our head office at (02) 885-0131.

DOE, Winrock budget P7.5M for hydro projects

By Abigail L. Ho

THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY HAS PUSHED an agreement with Winrock International to earmark P7.5 million for the electrification of four barangays in the autonomous region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) using micro-hydropower technology.

The funding for the project will come from the DOE, in partnership with the Philippine Rural Power Project, which the World Bank funds through the Global Environment Facility.

Winrock, for its part, through the Alliance for Mindanao Off-Grid Renewable Energy (Amore) Program, will shoulder the rest of 11 percent of total projections, as well as 25 percent of the procurement, engineering and construction costs of the micro-hydro systems.

"ARMM is the least electrified region in the country and home to the poorest and most conflict-ridden areas in the country. These areas are in most need of electricity to fuel economic growth and we appreciate Winrock's participation in this undertaking," Energy Secretary Raphael Lotilla said via statement yesterday.

Winrock is currently implementing the Amore Program, which aims to promote peace and progress in the ARMM areas.

To date, the program has brought power to 237 barangays using photovoltaic (PV) panels.

Under the second phase of the Amore undertaking, at least 20 micro-hydro systems will be installed for the electrification of unviable barangays in the ARMM.

Lotilla said it was becoming more and more difficult for the government to provide power to all of the country's 41,956 barangays due to the state's budgetary constraints.

As of November, the country's barangay electrification level stood at 99.58 percent, with 2,274 barangays still without power.

The government aims to provide power to all barangays in the country by 2008.

Shares ... From page B1

Market breadth was negative with 92 losers and 42 gainers, while 41 stocks were unchanged. Volume was 2.7 billion shares worth P4.27 billion.

"We saw a slowdown as there was no strong buying appetite, especially since the Christmas holidays are just a few days away," said investment house Sarangani Securities Inc.

"Investors were also hesitant to buy stocks because they did not see any major news that could really kick up a rally," he said. AFP

Regional ... From page B1

currency crisis—earlier than one year would be refunded only two-thirds of the amount.

Stock broker Joseph Bonus of Eagle Equities Inc. said even the equities markets turned jittery following Thailand's move.

"The market really invoked an assurance from the BSP that it won't do the same," Bonus said.

After hitting a new four-and-a-half year high of 49.31 to $1 on Monday, the peso yesterday opened near the day's high of 49.37 but closed near the low of 49.78, Reuters turnover was heavy at $868.50 million.

Banco de Oro Universal Bank chief economist Jonathan Rowles said the steep fall was a knee-jerk reaction to the capital control in Thailand. He said the same seen (SEE dollar) overturn to as 49.90/95.

Other currencies in the region also experienced to massive sell off over fifteen on the Thai central bank's announcement.

But the BSP is not contemplating a further liberalization of its foreign exchange policies to allow banks to buy more dollars given the strong inflow of foreign exchange not just from foreign portfolio investments but also from overseas Filipino workers' remittances.

During its weekly meeting on Thursday, the BSP's policy-making Monetary Board is set to discuss possible measures to ease the limit on banks' capacity to stockpile dollars or the overbought limit.

For the first time since the Asian currency crisis, the BSP is considering to pack up banks' allowable dollar purchases to at least $1 million from the current cap of $5 million. An other options on the table is the Bankers Association of the Philippines' proposal to do away with the nominal threshold and use capital adequacy ratio (CAR) as the main criterion in setting the limits, giving more leeway to banks with better balance sheets.

Prior to the 1997 Asian currency turmoil, the allowable overbought position was as high as 20 percent of a bank's unimpaired capital and the overnold limit 10 percent of unimpaired capital. There was no nominal limit in US dollar terms.

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MOTORING

Editor Cesar D. Hangarang

THE HONDA Civic's lighter and more aerodynamic body keeps the wind at bay and helps the engine consume less fuel

For now, the goal is to achieve better mileage

By Charles E. Bahar

OVER THE PAST SEVERAL YEARS, THE promise of hydrogen-powered vehicles dominating our transport landscape has remained unrealized while the problems it was supposed to solve have remained unanswered.

Fuel prices continue to rise. The situation in the Middle East—the world's chief source of oil—has remained volatile.

The stability of this region is essential, considering the world demand for oil is set to increase 37 percent by 2030, according to the US-based Energy Information Administration's second report.

Even groups skeptic on the issue of climate change see starting to admit that the carbon dioxide emissions cars, trucks and power stations expel into the atmosphere might have disastrous consequences to our environment.

Potential source

In the search for a nonpolluting energy source, hydrogen is often cited as a potential source of unlimited clean power.

The eight-generation Honda Civic is one of the company's success stories

But while automakers are experimenting with vehicles equipped with hydrogen fuel cells that would someday replace internal combustion-engines-altogether, engineers are yet to find a way to make these fuel cells efficient enough to drive long distances, and cheap enough to be affordable (these types of vehicle cost $1 million apiece, which is around P49 million).

Indeed, no one will buy a hydrogen-powered car unless there are hydrogen-refilling stations and no one will produce vehicles powered by a hydrogen fuel cell unless there are buyers. In the same way, no one will build distribution and storage systems for hydrogen fuel if there are no customers.

So while the world is still waiting for a breakthrough, automakers at the moment are responding by coming up with new generation vehicles that consume less fuel, emit much cleaner emissions while achieving better mileage.

Fuel efficient

One example is Japanese automaker Honda, which is developing innovative and exciting alternative means of future transport (like Honda's FCX fuel cell vehicle). It is also now developing fully functional hybrid vehicles like the Civic Hybrid that achieves ultra-high fuel economy of 28.0 km/liter to 31 km/liter) as well as gasoline-fed vehicles made to be much more fuel-efficient...reliable, safe to drive and perhaps more important, not too expensive to manufacture.

The eight-generation Honda Civic is one of the company's success stories. With its redesigned, restyled and repowered package, the mid-size sedan offers a more powerful engine due to also fuel-efficient (Honda says the new car achieves fuel economy of around 17 km/liter).

For example the 140 horsepower engine powering the Civic's 1.8-liter variant delivers acceleration on par with a 2.0 liter engine but with a fuel economy equivalent to that of a 1.6-liter engine.

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Last week, Honda Cars Philippines Inc. organized a fuel-efficiency driving competition to prove this claim. The Totally Amazing Drive (TAD) Fuel Eco competition invited owners and members of the motoring media who drove the new 1.8 automatic version of the Civic under normal, day-to-day driving conditions (following traffic rules, car's air-conditioning system open and with some tire and other standard accessories intact).

The first leg of the competition saw 16 winners, the pair of Federico Villena and Rommel Tobias (customer category), finishing the 34.1-km distance using only 4.201 liters of gasoline (8.05.3 km/liter consumption) and the pair of Ronald delos Reyes and Ramon Bautista (media category) finishing the 34.4-km distance using only 3.116 liters of gasoline (8.126 km/liter consumption).

French oil giant Total supplied the fuel.

HCPI informed that the event is aimed at continuing the company's fuel economy awareness campaign specially now that fuel prices fluctuate, helping motorists find more practical ways in our their driving expenses, and proving that today's automakers are doing their best to come up with new vehicles that achieve better mileage.

HONDA says the 1.8 liter variant of its iconic Civic delivers acceleration on par with a 2.0 liter engine but with a fuel economy equivalent to that of a 1.6-liter engine

7 ways to log more km

FROM SAVING TO LOWERING THE COST of routine maintenance, these few simple habits would help keep one's fuel costs in check.

1 Choosing a four-cylinder engine rather than a V6, or a V6 rather than a V8, is usually the way to go if you want to get the best fuel economy. Likewise, small, light cars tend to be more miserly with fuel than larger, bulkier vehicles.

2 While idling, a vehicle eats up fuel without logging any kilometers. Don't let the engine run at idle for any longer than necessary. With most gasoline engines, it's more efficient to turn off the engine rather than idle for 30 seconds or longer.

3 If you can, avoid hard accelerating or braking. Driving smoothly and steadily makes the best use of your fuel and when you move out from a standstill, bring the car up to speed briskly but not abruptly.

4 Once up to speed, maintain a steady pace to top gear. Varying your speed a lot wastes fuel. Smooth acceleration, cornering and braking not only save fuel, but also extend the life of the engine, transmission and brakes.

5 When driving on highways, over 50 percent of engine power goes to overcoming aerodynamic drag. Try not to add to the drag by carrying things on top of your vehicle or a loaded roof rack can decrease a car's fuel economy by 5 percent. Also, don't ride with your windows open on the highway as this also disrupts the smooth airflow and creates extra drag.

6 A clogged air filter alone can cause up to a 10 percent increase in fuel consumption. Be sure to follow the maintenance schedule in your vehicle's manual, and act promptly if you sense any unusual sound, smell, or vibration.

7 Keep your tires properly inflated. Underinflated tires require more energy to roll, which not only wastes fuel but wears the tires faster. The recommended tire pressures are found on a label inside the car or ask your dealer about it.

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Coming-up cars ... eventually

"IS IT TRUE THAT THE TOYOTA ALTIS will be phased out beginning 2008?" "Is it confirmed revealed by a reader or are we because it coincided with news of the Toyota Auris's debut at the Bologna Motor Show in Italy last Dec. 5.

Since Auris by name is the replacement of the Toyota Corolla in Europe and Japan, by others as the Corolla hatchback, the Auris will be launched across Europe as a new core model in the line-up. Hence the question in 2007: The question is: Will the Auris be introduced eventually in the Asia-Pacific region to replace the Altis, a.k.a. the Corolla?

We certainly hope so, since the Auris is very ahead of the Altis in terms of technology and design. Larger in every dimension than the Corolla and equipped with sporty 16-inch alloy wheels, the Auris has an all-new chassis and suspension system with an I-axis MacPherson strut setup up front and a torsion beam in the rear.

Offer

Toyota will offer the Auris in three

On the Road

Aida Sze-Ma-Mendoza

door and five-door hatchback body types with a choice of two gasoline engines, a 1.4 VVT-i and 1.6 Dual VVT-i and three diesel engines, 1.4 D-4D, 2.0 D-4D and 2.2 D-4D. All variants of the Auris have Electric Power Steering enhancing responsive driving.

More likely, if and when Toyota decides to bring the Auris here, initially it will be the gasoline versions, given the advertising quality of diesel fuel in the country compared to Europe's. The Dual Variable Valve Timing (VVT-i) system of the 1.6-liter gasoline variant would attract car enthusiasts to the 1ZR-FE Series, dated here in the 2007 Corolla Altis for better fuel efficiency while increasing power. While a six-speed manual transmission will be standard with the 2.0 and 2.2 diesel Auris, a new Multi-Mode four-speed automatic with position-shift will be optional with the 1.6 Dual VVT-i and 1.4 D-4D variants.

Space concept

Toyota revealed the Auris space concept for the first time at the Tokyo Motor Show last September, signaling a new interpretation of the cute Toyota design philosophy of Clean Cutting. Designed to maximize the inside use, the mini-wagon concept a tall and spacious with a high seating, short overhangs and forward balance as key features of the cabin or driving area.

Inside the Auris, an innovative bridge-shaped center console raises the seat from higher on the dashboard, closer to the driver, said Integrator Box inside the cabin. The Auris space concept also features The EasyEntry system allows simple one-touch folding of the rear seats to create a large, flat floored cargo area with 554 liter capacity. The luggage space area could be further have a combined capacity of 1,335 liters.

Rear seat passengers in the Auris will enjoy more knee room thanks to the driver of the Auris's greater cabin height and flat rear floor. As for safety, the Auris will be fitted with up to nine airbags with a driver's knee airbag as standard. All but six variants have Active Head Restraints. Brake Assist while higher grade models will have Intelligent Stability Control and Traction Control in addition. All variants will have Toyota's VSC+ (Motorcar Integrated Control) to protect passengers from impact forces.

New Lancer

But the Auris is not the only new car coming up in 2006. At the North American International Auto Show in Detroit this January, Mitsubishi will unveil the 2008 Lancer compact sports sedan with design cues from her concept-4 and concept SportBack showcased at the 2005 Tokyo Motor Show. The "shark-nosed" front end of the new Lancer was inspired by jet fighter air intakes, the designers say. From the rear perspective, the new Lancer looks like the Lancer Evolution VIII.

Built on the same global platform used for the 2007 Outlander SUV, the body is sexier and has a longer wheelbase than the outgoing Lancer, but shorter in overall length. The redesigned Lancer will be manufactured progressively in world markets starting in spring 2007 in North America. A new Lancer Evolution supercar—the X—is also coming up.

CVT option

The first-ever 2008 Lancer will have a 2.0-liter 152-hp aluminum DOHC Mivec

MITSUBISHI Lancer

4-cylinder engine that produces 51 foot-horsepower than the current Lancer engine. It will be the first Mitsubishi in North America to offer an optional Continuously Variable Transmission (CVT) with a six-step "Sportronic" mode using magnesium steering wheel paddle shifters in the sport-tuned GTS model. For the first time, the sun-roof moonroof is now available in the base model in the Lancer, only a five-speed manual or the CVT option.

In that aspect, we are ahead of North America on other CVT in Mitsubishi vehicles has been available here for years.

* * *

TODAY'S BUMPER STICKER: A great many people think they are thinking when they are merely rearranging their prejudices. (William James)

* * *

E-mail comments to aida_sevilla@yahoo.com

TOYOTA Auris

A gift of drift

ALEX PEREZ SKILLED INTO THE paddock with very little drama. Level-headed and with an unassuming air, I met the veteran at the Batangas Racing Circuit. The black and orange ELS Lykos Nissan 350Z (2006) reeked of gasoline and oil, human beings are a powerful scent I would describe the typical bustling and slightly less-conscientious aura of a muscle car fuel-injected engine.

I've known Alex for quite some time already. But it's one thing to see Alex during a hot lap for some radio show years ago. He had already been racing sedans events by the time he lived his hand at rallying and his performance at that particularly Rally Pilipinas was quite impressive. It is no shock he has been driving a Subaru on our local fast-tracks to convenience. I was thrilled anyway, left dead in the water with a snowball's chance in hell. You get the picture.

Our driving lesson took place quite pretty soon after that. I flung up my helmet bag and had a pep after the fact. Alex, all smiles, greeted me in the garage, ready to drive, even dabbling in several other disciplines of motor sport I believe.

So what was I doing at the BRC, the morning back on a track day with friends, scared silly by the notion of a 12-yo, 3-up, pull out 5-point safety-belted daily driver-turned show-and-shine, driving into the corner and down the hill, a San Jay portion set with his friends, terrorizing helpless passengers?

Before I would have it, the chance coming at the track would give me the opportunity to experience the hand-power clutch, shifting more and faster, more brute the pure, meaner seat of the sound, thrust and propped G's. Just how sideways did we go? Let's just say when you have to start looking out the side passenger window to see where the protruded portside of you, to see in which direction the car is headed—the car is more definitely traveling broadside-first.

One of the top wheelmen

Yes, ladies and gentlemen, there are drifters in the Philippines and from what I gather from the participants, Alex is one of the top wheelmen in the spectacular, up and screaming driving discipline. The rubber meets the road through the sanctioned lanes and limits of the racetrack would confirm this without a

My drift

Andre Fidero

shimmer of a doubt.

Had some of the most fun I've ever had in a vehicle, moving or parked, during the four laps of BRC in Alex's dragworthy drift car. To say it's been a while since I was behind the wheel of a car for drifting is an understatement. Or about my initiation to the art of drifting. Attack was on his mind from the get-go.

First corner: turn-in the countertrack and the pressure built. Hybrid was already accustoming the life and visual cue of his rear Advan Bloom track tires. It was only after several turns and hairs later that I was able to focus on the car's response and the adrenaline of being driven way over the limits of traction and adhesion.

Unique driving technique

But that I would like to learn how to drive in the aggressive and spectacular style from just a few laps on a finale—but I tried to watch up on many of the unique driving techniques as my overwhelmed brain would allow him. It's pretty smooth-lay, driven in conventional

the steer-driven gesture of "Stage Against the Rules" in the Fast and Furious.

All I can say is that the corner approaches were fast and self-less invitation to the by-this-book grip style that I have been using my entire sport-driving life. Fortunately, I was not using it in the same way, way on the inside of where cars are supposed to be. It is then but logical that any car will want to swap ends. Add on that quick-cornering wheel input and counter-slide with pedal footwork and an earthward, unbalanced car can be made to contain to moments of heart-fed sliding elegance.

Drifting is a brash, hard-core and adrenaline-pinking. To an experience that moved my both figuratively and literally, I can honestly say that I'm now a believer. But now I'm hooked—I get Alex's drift.

1M Yaris built by Toyota in Europe

ON DEC. 11 AT A PRL TPE millionth Yaris rolled off the assembly line in Toyota Motor Manufacturing France, Valenciennes plant. The start of production in 1999 has increased steadily, supporting the growing sales success of Yaris, one of Toyota Motor Europe's core models, designed and built in Europe for Europeans.

Today, TMMF has a production capacity of 270,000 units per year and a workforce of 1,900 persons, operating in three shifts.

Takashi Imaishita, president and CEO, Toyota Motor Europe, praised the achievement by highlighting the principles of the work grounded by the Toyota Way.

Key player

"TMMF is a key player for Toyota's manufacturing organization in Europe. Since its launch, TMMF has consistently met the very demanding Toyota standards in terms of quality efficiency and flexibility, delivering a second product that has been Toyota's biggest seller in Europe since 2000.

"But what we choose the relevance of the strategy of 'building our cars—models for Europe,'" Imaishita said.

According to TMMF president Jean-Luc Leroy, this performance is based on "a talented, highly integrated manufacturing team" that has made possible, thanks to a dynamic sound policy that focuses on quality, creativity and a systematic learning process."

Said Leroy: "Our team members must possess the skills to deliver the required quality but must improvise. It is we want them to share our key values of team work and continuous improvement."

Since the launch of its first generation model, Yaris has been a success story for Toyota in Europe. Named "Car of the Year 2000," acclaimed edged as the safest car in its segment by EuroNCAP, the first generation Yaris was delivered to more than 1.4 million customers in Europe between 1999 and 2005.

The new generation Yaris already proves to be an even bigger hit, with 300,000 units registered to reach 450,000 units. It offers an even more advanced package, including high levels of interior space and versatility, use of advanced technology, notably 6 gasbags, disc anti-skid safety. It has obtained a 5-star EuroNCAP rating (as well 35 points for adult protection).

Mitsubishi Strada tops 4x4 pickup segment

AFTER INTRODUCING ITS ALL-NEW Strada 4x4 pickup late September, Mitsubishi Motors Philippines Corporation announced that Rs. 5 positions in the 4x4 pickup category for 2 consecutive months.

According to the combined Chamber of Automotive Manufacturers of the Philippines (Camp) and Truck Manufacturers Association reports, the all-new Strada has sold 250 out of 2,000 units for the category, accounting for a remarkable 19 percent market share. Furthermore, the all-new Strada settled 72 percent of the 4x4 pickup

STRADA

category, as it sold 252 units in October out of total 352 4x4 pickups retailed.

Tetsuroh Sugiura, Mitsubishi Motors Philippines' AVP for Marketing Services, commented that "We remain to be optimistic with the sales of the all-new Strada for the coming months as we try to expand its range. The all-new Mitsubishi Strada was built not just as a pickup but also as an everyday work horse vehicle for business, family and recreation. Therefore Mitsubishi Motors gave it fresh and exciting styling, world's cunning performance, best in class cabin convenience, a comfortable ride and SUV interior styling and trim."

Invitation

I would like to invite everyone to visit any of our dealerships and test drive our new Strada to discover for one it is fast becoming the choice in the 4x4 pick up category," Dalmacio added.

It can be recalled that the previous model Strada, was able to secure and retain market leadership of the 4x4 pickups for 7 consecutive years from its time it was introduced in 1997 and sought in 2003. Now Mitsubishi is aiming to repeat or even surpass the best place the all-new Strada's class-leading features, performance, comfort and outstanding value for money specifications.

Aside from its very unique and distinctive styling, the all-new Strada features the latest Turbocharged and Intercooled Direct Injection (Diesel (DI-D) with Common Rail Diesel engine that is mated to any locally available diesel fuel.

Furthermore, the all-new Strada boasts of having the maximum cabin for better cycling comfort at the same time having the Fastening performance found on right-size SUVs. The all-new Strada is available at all MMPC Automotive nationwide.

Seaoil cuts E10 price, celebrates enactment of Biofuels Law

THE PRICE OF SEAOIL E10 (10 gasoline blended with 1 percent ethanol) is now cheaper by 50 centavos per liter. This is the result of the signing into law of the Biofuels Act of 2006 which he believes would usher a "field of opportunities" for energy.

Said Mr. Sun:

"As a way of celebrating the enactment of the Biofuels Law, Seaoil is reducing the price of Seaoil E10 by 50 centavos per liter. This means that the E10 gasoline you will buy in all Seaoil service stations worldwide will be 50 centavos cheaper than ordinary gasoline in other gasoline stations, making Seaoil E10 not only the cheapest fuel, but also the cheapest fuel in the area," he said.

Pioneering efforts

Seaoil has been championing the use of biofuels, or fuels for vehicles derived from plants, even before the biofuels bill was filed in Congress. The Department of Energy has even cited Seaoil for its pioneering efforts in bringing E10 and the benefits to the Philippine market as early as 1990.

In fact, Sy revealed that Seaoil has installed some 4 million gallon of E10 since the company introduced the clean-burning, high-octane fuel in August of last year.

He added that because of its aggressiveness in selling biofuels, Seaoil is now considered the first biofuels major in the Philippine petroleum industry.

"We at Seaoil are the first to sell biofuels in all of our 104 stations nationwide. Most players in the industry are just beginning to adjust to the requirements of the Biofuels Law, until some of them selling E10 in only a handful of stations," he explained.

Landmark legislation

The Biofuels Law is a landmark legislation considered by many as the most important work of the 12th Congress. It mandates the use of biofuels by blending 5 percent bioethanol—which comes from sugarcane or cassava—with gasoline within two years after the law takes effect. The blend will be increased to 10 percent within four years.

The law also requires the blending of one percent coco methyl ester with petroleum diesel within three months, increasing to two percent within two years.

Anticipating the growing demand for ethanol, Sy has announced that Seaoil would put up two ethanol processing plant capable of producing 100,000 liters of ethanol from sugarcane a day.

"A second one the eventual needs to biofuels of the country," Sy said. "Seaoil would be a wholesale player in ethanol but only now the impact of rising oil prices has also aroused a better interest in the investments.

"It will also benefit farmers' livelihood for our countrymen in the rural areas who now have a new market for their crops," he said.

BUSINESS

Review sought on water firms' profit scheme

Concessionaires' exemption from 12% profit limit questioned

By Christine A. Gotinga

NOW THAT THE WATER RATES ARE SET to go up, two consumer-oriented groups are calling for a review and modification of the profit-sharing mechanism of the private water concessionaires as approved by the government regulator.

In separate petitions filed with both chambers of Congress, Bantay Tubig Network and Kaakbayan ng mga Tanak ng Bayan- Mt Pilipinas Ecosociety Movement (Kaakbay) are seeking a review of results seen issued by the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) that exempts Manila Water Company Inc. and the rapidmixed Maynilad Water Services Inc. from the 12-percent profit sharing limitation allowed for public utilities.

Kaakbay said that according to MWSS Board Resolution No. 2004-203 and Regulatory Office (RO) Resolution No. 01-006-CO, the water firms are more agents and concessionaires, thus regarding their earnings as public utilities and allowing them to pass on their rates to consumers.

"These concessionaires are allowed to charge consumers an additional P1.33 per cubic meter for Manila Water, and P4.14 per cubic meter for Maynilad per cubic meter of water," Kaakbay said in a letter. "(The figure) translates to about P6.33 billion for Manila Water, and P56.018 billion for Maynilad's month of corporate income taxes that are passed on to consumers."

Kaakbay added that, in terms of real-ising profits, the recalculations of the MWSS and MWSS-RO also exempted the concessionaires from the 12-percent profit margin limitation set under Section 12 of the MWSS Charter.

"A Commission on Audit report in 1998 revealed that Manila Water has registered a 48.92-percent rate of return on user base in 1999 and was able to make P205 million in excess income by that time," the group said. "Since this resolution has been issued, the concessionaires have been making huge profits," said Jude Esguerra, Bantay Tubig Network convenor.

Falsifying ITRs to secure bank loans riles BIR

By Michelle V. Baron

THE BUREAU OF INTERNAL REVENUE IS cracking down hard on loan applicants who falsify their income tax returns just to have their bank loans approved.

The BIR in a statement said that not only will the bureau go after high-profile tax evaders, under the Run After Tax Evaders (RATE) program, it will also deal with individuals who become tax cheats.

The BIR learned that some persons had altered their ITRs to make it appear that they have higher income in order to facilitate their loan application with banks.

Those caught falsifying their ITRs would be charged for violating Section 255 of the National Internal Revenue Code (supplying incorrect tax information), and Article 171(1) of the Revised Penal Code (falsification of public or official documents).

The BIR last week filed charges against two persons from Bulacan, another from Manila, and a fourth from Antipolo City, for allegedly using false ITRs.

The BIR said the suspects submitted false ITRs to their banks to meet the requirements for loan applications. The four were caught when the banks checked with the BIR and learned that the ITRs were not authentic.

"Falsification was done to make it appear that (applicants) have a stable source of income, and thus minimal data banks into approving their loan applications," the BIR said.

Revised Circular No. 474 of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas mandates loan applicants and their sureties to submit a copy of their latest ITRs, duly stamped as received by the BIR, to their banks. They are also required to submit a waiver of confidentiality of information on their tax payments.

Requiring ITRs from loan applicants does not only help the BIR catch those making false income claims, it also helps the bureau to encourage people to diligently file their income tax returns and pay the proper taxes.

Aside from banks, some foreign embassies have likewise urged to require the submission of ITRs from people wanting to travel abroad.

The BIR said asking institutions to require the submission of ITRs for various transactions will help government improve tax collection.

Baguio Gold edges closer to acquiring PAL

By Riza T. Olchondra

BAGUIO GOLD HOLDINGS CORP. HAS SECURED the clearance from the Philippine Airlines' receiver for a debt-to-equity swap that would enable the holding company to buy the flag carrier.

In a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange, the holding company of tycoon Tan said that it has received confirmation that its debt-to-equity swap with Trammark Holdings Corp. does not violate PAL's debt rehabilitation plan.

After the swap, Baguio Gold will proceed to buy 87.6 percent of Philippine Airlines from the six companies that own the carrier's biggest stakes. The publicly traded holding company will then have control of their shareholdings, as well as liabilities.

The six firms are Lucio Tan Holdings Inc., Cebu Pacific Holdings Inc., Rizalfil Holdings Corp., Network Holdings and Equities Inc., Tel Holdings Inc. and Iberia Holdings and Equities Inc.

Tan's Trammark Holdings Corp., which owns 67 percent of Baguio Gold, will then end up with 87.6 percent of the listed company once the debt of the six PAL shareholders are converted into equity. The rest will be held by minor shareholders.

Baguio Gold needs to increase its authorized capital to P20 billion from the current P400 million to finance the buyout, after which it will have control of PAL.

PAL, meanwhile, will use the bulk of the proceeds from the sale of shares for its fleet expansion program. It announced early this month that it had ordered six Boeing Co. planes for about $1.5 billion to increase flights to the United States, Canada, Australia and its overseas Filipino routes.

The agreement, which PAL president Jaime Bautista signed with Boeing vice president for sales Bob Lutel in Honolulu last month, covers a firm order for two B777-300ER jets and purchase rights for two additional units.

Separately, PAL has signed a letter of intent with GE Commercial Aviation Services for the lease of two B777-300ER aircraft.

The flag carrier currently flies to 24 destinations in 13 countries and territories.

LIFESTYLE
Editor Chelo Banal-Formoso Chief of Correspondents Pam Pastor

25 to the Rescue

We want to go beyond the pages and find a way to touch your lives in a concrete way. This new section, which is our Christmas and year-long gift to you, will do just that. Here are 21 25x25 resolves—our way of celebrating the *Inquirer*'s 21st anniversary.

WE'VE DONE A LOT OF this things while searching on 25x25 issues. We've explored rare places, we've tried different jobs, we've met all kinds of people, we've busted our boundaries and felt our comfort zones. But the most fun we have is when we get the chance to interact with our readers—when you join our resolves and we give you prizes, when you contribute to our scrapbooks, when you write us e-mails, when we meet you face to face.

For a while now we've had a gnawing desire to go beyond the pages and touch your life in more concrete ways. And we know just how to do that.

Over the years, we've built a network of resources—people we work with regularly to help produce interesting and interesting issues for you.

We thought, why not use this network to find answers to your real needs, to turn your wishes to reality?

That's where 25x25 to the Rescue was born. The idea has been brewing for months now. We started it in June, when we asked Metro to give refund supplies to street children who were going to start attending school. And now is the perfect time to launch it because it is Christmas.

This was originally meant to be our gift to you—and this gift will become a regular part of our section. It is our plans to hold events weekly—the most realized dreams, the lesser.

For two weeks, we asked you to tell us about your greatest desires. Hundreds of you responded, some writing Dear Santa letters, others chatting get-smooth-ing stories. We read every single one of them.

We were especially touched by the fact that majority of you asked for things not for yourselves but for the people you love.

Inspired by Oprah, Make A Wish and, yes, "Wish Ko Lang," we started choosing the first stories that we would carry out. We made phone calls—a lot of phone calls. And everyone we called responded enthusiastically. No one said no.

Our inner work was packed with stories we needed to carry out. In the past few days, our friends have given away a TV, an mp3 player, spa treatments, boxes and boxes of pizza, a ton of doughnuts, cooking sets, a scooter, a guitar, eyeglasses and more.

We said that we wanted to make your dreams come true. But the truth is, this extra section is a dream come true for us. This way, a gift for you, but is also because a gift for us.

Each time someone said, "Yes!" or "I can do that!" or "Done!," we were elated. And a lot of the people and companies we spoke with offered much more than we expected.

We've always believed in the goodness of people—and this project has strengthened that belief.

What you'll read in our pages in the first batch of rescues. Twenty-one stories, one for each beautiful year in *Inquirer*'s history. We're just getting started.

Here's to love, peace and more million wishes.

And yes, we're working on getting that section.

E-mail your wishes to 25x25rescue@gmail.com

If you or your company would like to help with our rescues, e-mail 25rescue@gmail.com

FULLY BOOKED: marketing manager Rhea Llorca holds the book for Chanmin.

The flying book

All she wanted was something to read

INQUIRER 25X25 LIVED readers—and just 25x25 readers, but all kinds of readers. So when Chanmin Mae Lande of Iloilo City wrote to us about a book that she really wanted to read, we didn't even think twice.

"I've been an avid fan of the 25x25 section because I find it very informative. I write to you for the first time because I want something for myself," she wrote. "This is just a simple wish but it will really bring joy to me. I want to have a book by Paulo Coelho. I read the very popular book "The Alchemist," which I borrowed from my friend, and I found it very inspiring, a friend told me that it's a must to read his other book titled "Eleven Minutes." Unfortunately, I don't know anybody that I can borrow it from."

We called Fully Booked's Tiki Bar and asked if she could help. Yes, she said. "Sure!" A couple of days later, a copy of Paulo Coelho's "Eleven Minutes" arrived at the JM Coffee.

Then we called Ms23 to pick up the book and send it on its merry way.

She said, "Thank you very much for the early Christmas gift. I am really happy that you are going to grant my simple wish. I hope you will make a lot of people happy this Christmas season."

We hope that by the time this article comes out, Ms is already engrossed in her new Paulo Coelho book.

Enjoy, Ms!

Fully Booked is located at Bonifacio Stopover, Gateway and Mall of Asia. Visit www.fullybooked.com.ph.

Pam Pastor

THE LIGHTHOUSE Center's library and play area

A place to read and play

By Pam Pastor
Photos by Ryan Lim

This was our first DIAL To the Rescue, although we didn't know it then

WE DIDN'T KNOW IT then, but our partnership with Lorenzo Tañada, a retired judge who, with his Lighthouse Center for Children's Foundation, has been taking care of disadvantaged children in Tayuman and other areas was the first DIAL to the Rescue.

In December of 2006, we wrote about how Tess Pak e-mailed about his foundation reached out hearts and led us to action. We raised money, collected goods and visited the children not just to hand over the donations but to spend time with the kids and serve them lunch.

We were overwhelmed by the kindness of Judge Lory and the people around us who willingly shared what they have with the kids.

Our relationship with Lighthouse didn't end there. Because after the article, so many other people and companies expressed their desire to do what they can to help.

Earlier this year, we returned to the Lighthouse Center for a special visit.

Tess Pak had called and expressed his desire to create a library and play area for the kids.

JUDGE Lory reads to a child.

SPAGHETTI love

SHOPPING at Shopwise

LOADING the goodies

THE KIDS people of Shopwise

FLYER Read the magician

He called me and we started the library and play area that Tess Pak had built for the kids.

MIRIAM CO

Soliciting Shopwise people

The kindness of the people in Shopwise was overwhelming. We had a list of needs from the Lighthouse and Ms Minda and the supermarket's supervisors were all there to help make sure we would get everything on the list.

When Joe, the produce supervisor, saw that I had a sack of onions and a sack of garlic on the list, he asked one of the sales assistants to get some from their stock room.

"Pero, pitas na yung pinakamaganda," he said. I'm not knowing I could hear him. I will never forget that.

We filled carts with noodles, rice, dried fish, mongo beans, gallons of soy sauce—things the usual kitchen needs on a daily basis.

Soon, we were back outside Shopwise and everyone was helping us load the groceries into the back of the truck.

Minutes later, Tess' supervisor approached me. "Ma'am yung mga po sana dagge nasin sa loob, baka kasi umasim sa init ng araw. Baka sumakit ang tyan ng mga bata." I would never forget that, too.

We arrived at the center and we started the library and play area that Tess Pak had built for the kids.

THE KIDS enjoy the rides

One enchanted day

Text and photos by Pam Pastor

ANDY ARUMDO, barangay captain of Barangay Marilag in Project 4, QC, wrote to us about the kids in his neighborhood.

"I'm hoping that you could grant my wish for the less-fortunate kids in our barangay. I would like to ask your kind hearts to bring the less-fortunate kids of Barangay Marilag to Enchanted Kingdom so they will experience the joy of being in a world-class amusement park.

There are at least 30 kids who are dreaming for this chance of a lifetime. If given the chance, this will surely boost their morale, giving them the confidence to be part of the community. It will surely be one of the most memorable Christmases they will ever have."

When Dennis Cruz, the project development of Enchanted Kingdom, heard about the e-mail which they had sent 2007 to the Bosses, he had one word for us: "Tara!"

Soon, we were corresponding with Mike Sarmiento, Enchanted Kingdom's corporate communications services head, planning the kids' visit.

But three days before the scheduled trip, we still faced a big problem. We had no idea how to bring the kids to Enchanted Kingdom.

I called the chapters. I changed my FM status to "Help! I need a bus!"

Victory Liner rushed up texting us:

VICTORY Liner brings the kids to Enchanted Kingdom.

"Victory is victory!" one of the guardians said.

In the bus started rolling and Victory Liner's Cubao Station Inn Sunday the kids started screaming in excitement. They sounded like they were already on a roller coaster.

At Enchanted Kingdom, they enjoyed the rides, ate delicious meals and were got to bring home Enchanted Kingdom goodies.

Each time they walked past us, they waved, smiled and said: "Thank you po!"

The Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) was having its Family Day at Enchanted Kingdom on the same day and even Owwa's employees did their bit in spreading the message of kindness.

As the guardians were trying to figure out what to buy for the kids' dinner, some people from Owwa who were serving early handed them meal coupons that they received.

Although Andy planned to return to Quezon City early, it was clear the kids wanted to stay.

Worried about having the bus out too late, I sent an SMS to Manny: "Is it okay if the bus leaves a little past 9 p.m.? We want the kids to see the fireworks."

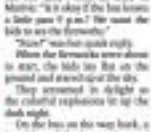
"Sure," was the quick reply.

When the fireworks were about to start, the kids lay flat on the ground and stared up at the sky.

They screamed in delight as the colorful explosions lit up the dark night.

On the bus on the way back, a lot of them fell asleep, exhausted from a full day of fun and excitement.

It was a beautiful day—for the kids, for the adults, for us—and one that we'll all remember for a very long time.



LUNCH break

SHAPED OUTS of the memorable day

THERE are enough doughnuts for everyone.

PZA does Charlene's makeup.

Queens for a day

Doughnuts for kids and makeovers for teachers

By Pam Pastor

WHEN WE ANNOUNCED EARLY TO the library, it was our screw with the companies that would hear about it would also express their desire to help even without us calling them.

Hot Loops was the first company to do this. Through Owen Arcaira of Systemworks, it expressed its desire to do something with DIAL To the Rescue.

And so when we received a letter from Charlaine Arimado, a volunteer teacher at BMES in Quezon City, we knew we had to call Hot Loops.

Charlaine wrote to tell us about the Christ-

YZA Palmares and volunteer teachers hold their gifts from Hot Loopers.

mas party they were planning for the kids of their kindergarten class: "Would you like to treat our students with snacks?"

Hot Loops promised to send doughnuts and party hats for all the kids.

But because we love teachers and because we have so much admiration for Charlaine and her colleagues who devote their time as volunteers at BMES, we thought we'd plan a treat for them as well.

We asked Pia Clemente's Pixie Dust of the Orient to put together makeup kits for the teachers. When she heard their story she said: "Naku! Sino ba ang mga makeover-an?"

On the day of the party, Hot Loops sent over a hundred doughnuts—no more than the kids, the parents and the teachers were able to enjoy them, too.

Yza Palmares, one of Pixie Dust's makeup artists, surprised the teachers with makeovers and special gifts from Pixie Dust.

"We were treated like queens! We felt so beautiful!" one teacher said.

...es a young barangay captain's dream to give
...less-fortunate kids of his neighborhood an unforgettable
...stmas. Enchanted Kingdom and Victory Liner made it happen

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WATSONS

Dentures for dad

DREAMING of dentures

DR. CHRISSIE and Dr. Manch give Tony a supraliminal treatment

My father is a preacher of the gospel. He has no teeth while teaching," said 17-year-old Aaron

By Pam Pastor

AFTER READING JUST THE first paragraph of 17-year-old Aaron Aguila's letter, we already knew we were granting his wish.

"My father, Antonio Aguila, is a preacher of the gospel and is living by faith in the word of God. He has no teeth while teaching."

Aaron wanted dentures for his father.

"I know in my heart that my father has the desire to have dentures even if he doesn't tell us. Please let this be my Christmas gift for him."

We called our favorite young dentists, 27-year-old Dr. Chrissie Caspero and 28-year-old Dr. Leandro Bonifacio, who told Aaron's father Tony to visit their clinic. When asked why they didn't drink water about pressing Aaron's wish, they said "this is our chance to use our profession to help others."

Chrissie and Manch aren't new to using their field of expertise to make a difference in other people's lives. They often go on dental missions even to far places. Chrissie recently had one in Davao.

After his first appointment with his dentists, Aaron's dad sent us a text message. "Maraming salamat. Hindutan si Doctorate sa aki kondisi. Salamat kay Dr. Chrissie and Dr. Manch, sa 2500 at sa kaloka."

Soon, Tony will return to the clinic to try on his dentures. By Christmas, he will have a perfect smile, and new teeth to help him enjoy the family's Noche Buena better.

The search for Philippine idol... autographs

By Ruth L. Navarro

WHAT'S SO SPECIAL ABOUT AN autograph? For a fan, it's everything! I should know because I've had my share of cruciates during the 84 years a few years back.

That's why when Pam Pastor (Abe's chief of correspondence) roughs me to my FM the day before the celebration of Inquirer's 21st anniversary/Christmas party with a simple request, I wouldn't say no.

She said: Ask for the autograph of four "Philippine Idol" finalists—Mel Tiangco, Gino Magdangal, Jan Marini and Mae Manzano—for 2005 reader Aaron Ongsiaco. The reader said he already had every "Idol" finalist's autograph except for these four.

Pam found out that the "Philippine Idols" were appearing at the awards' parties in our party. So my task was made easier. I would just pop inside the artists' lounge during the party.

This was where Entertainment reporter Rayzel Ann Diego came in. I told him about my errand duty and he said he would help out.

While keeping the invited performers comfortable before they went onstage, Rayzel remembered to call me up and told me to come to the lounge. When I got there, an effeminate man knew me and played basketball with me for the past few months wouldn't let me in until Rayzel came forward that it was okay. Security was thorough.

When Rayzel confirmed that I wasn't out to kidnap any of the idols, they let me in. The task of asking for their autograph was uneventful as Mae, Gino and Jan were very cooperative and polite.

But a new problem presented itself as Jhef Lauzon balked in above up. We waited inside the lounge, even after the "Idols" performance of "Kaleidoscope World" but still no Jhef.

Rayzel suggested that I contact ABC 5's Arnold Clavio and ask for help. When I did, she was obliging and even offered a couple of tickets to the finals at the Araneta Coliseum for Raro. But it was too late as his only road his e-mail the following day.

It was a good thing that another Inquirer reporter, Married Cruz, came to the rescue. She was kind enough to get Jhef's autograph.

When Mae won as "Idol," she said she was happy she would now afford a second hand car. But for us here in heaven, we're just happy to complete Aaron's collection.

A place to read . . .

From page B4

We also brought books donated by Shakespeare Book Store and by Tetra Pak partner schools like the La Salle Lobbel.

Back home, Tetra Pak also had a mini party for the kids, complete with spaghetti, ice cream and milk and a very funny magician named Rumil who performed for the kids for free.

"Thank you po," the little said and their words pinched my heart.

As we said goodbye, the kids kept waving and waving, and waving. But it wasn't really goodbye yet.

Up to this day, we are still collecting toys and books for the Lighthouse Center. We joined in on the fun by pledging P10,000 worth of toys, books and educational materials. We were able to get a lot of great stuff for the kids there.

We, too, can send books and toys for the children of Payatas and other Quezon City areas.

Each city in the Lighthouse Center is a home to approximately 30 being classified, so we are taking your good life for granted and is knowing how much you can do for others.

Visit the Soup Kitchen's principal office at 121-A1 Botany Drive, NGC Housing Project, Pasig Area, Barangay Commonwealth QC. Call 9598288, 9598262, 4307666 and 3873-3252098. E-mail: info@soup-kitchen.org or soupkitchen@inkamail.com.ph. Visit www.soup-kitchen.org

LIFESTYLE

Birthday high

2bU! heads a loving mother's request and surprises Catherine Danielle Bella on her 18th birthday with her favorite basketball team and sneakers

Text and photos by Cheryl Tiu
2bU! Correspondent

IT WAS VERY TOUCHing. Inquirer 2bU! had received an e-mail from Cynthia Bella, a mother from Cagayan de Oro, telling us about her daughter, Catherine Danielle Bella, a BS Management scholar at Ateneo de Manila University, who was celebrating her 18th birthday.

"In my own small way I do (a) thing I could afford, I arranged a surprise mini-party for her," the e-mail read. "Aside from just being simple, I also cannot attend since I cannot afford the extra expense anymore. Can you take my place and make her 18th birthday celebration one of the most memorable days in her life?"

She added that Catherine is a big fan of the Ateneo Blue Eagles ("Her sister her allowance just to watch the UAAP games. She went

SEE PAGE D2

CATHERINE'S incredible sweet friends are all in to surprise her.

THE LEGEND Blue Eagles hands the birthday girl an autographed team photo.

Birthday high

From page B1

in rage when they lost last season.") and of Converse sneakers.

Since my younger brother Chris is part of the Ateneo Blue Eagles, I showed him Mrs. Bello's e-mail, he was really moved by it and was more than willing to help. He sounded up several of his classmates to come join in on the surprise and also took the initiative to print out 20x6 team photos and get everyone—players, coaches, staff—to sign for Catherine.

Anyone 2005 also connected Jake Semiro to help us out with the Converse sneakers. "So sinusabi lelam daw ha ta, he agreed to sponsor the shoes—personally. Of course we chose blue as she could wear them to all the Blue Eagles games!).

So the big day finally rolled around. I told the boys to wait outside first while I walked into the Old Spaghetti House in Kalayaan for the introductions. I was met by Chrissy, Catherine's best friend and roommate, whom I had been coordinating.

I told Catherine I was from JSO and that her mom had written to us to help her celebrate her birthday.

Catherine was surprised. "Thank you!" she exclaimed with a smile. I handed her the box of shoes. "This is my first surprise," I said, "I have another one coming."

On cue, my brother and his classmates Hermes Montes, Yuri Sarmiento and Clifford Sese-Miller Kalaisa came a little later) all walked into the function room reserved for Catherine's birthday.

"Oh my god!" exclaimed Catherine.

The boys greeted her "happy birthday" and Chris handed her the autographed photo. We all sat down and chatted with Catherine and her friends, the Blue Eagles shared their crazy experiences in Cagayan de Oro and then also talked about their studies.

We saw how excited Catherine was when she was presented a surprise video from her family and friends back home. I told her to open the box that we had given her and when she did, she declared with laughter.

Chrissy was wearing the exact same pair! It just shows that I'm (we) never really been friends and obsessed in a lot of ways.

What happened next was probably the most touching event of the evening. Catherine paused to thank JSO and the dozens Blue Eagles for coming and preparing for her birthday.

She expressed how grateful she was to her mother for planning all this, for "doing such crazy things like sending us JSO!" just for her.

She became a little teary-eyed as she said that she might not be her daughter in the world yet it amazed her how her parents were always going through great lengths for her.

All of us in the room were completely struck and we all just listened in silence. At the end, we applauded her and her family.

It was clearly a surprise-filled birthday for Catherine—From the dinner and video to JSO and the Blue Eagles. The feeling that you get when you help make someone's wish come true is overwhelming. one that totally puts you on a natural high and completes your day.

We hope that we were able to make Catherine's 18th birthday memorable because... she (and/or what she says, she truly deserved it all.

E-mail the author at chie. dominique@yahoo.com

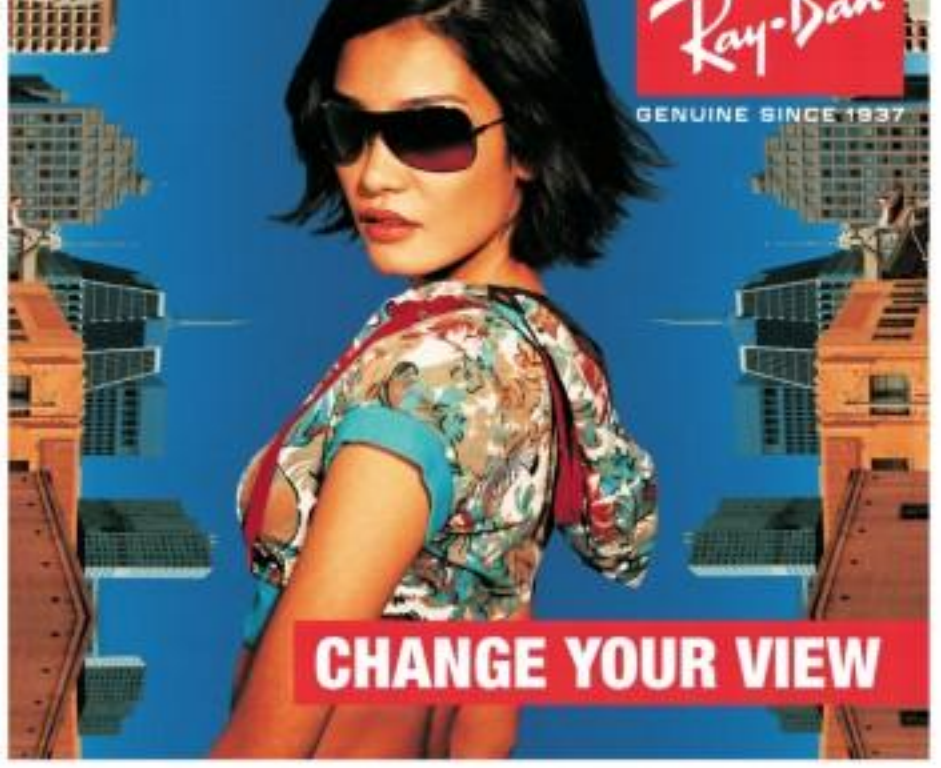
Eye-catching designs from The Legend

Ray-ban, the world's leading eyewear brand and global leader in the sector has presented their summer collection. Some of the most sought after styles this year were the new optical aviators (RB3137) in Gunmetal with its larger, soup style and the new rectangular, retro-style physics (RB4075). Following this trend, Ray-ban now has the new aviator inspired RB3277 and RB3279 from the Signature collection with light-colored lenses in metal

frame. All models in the Ray-ban collection are the product of meticulous, original styling that translates the best of the latest contemporary trends into an ever-contemporary look for millions of Ray-ban wearers around the world. The Ray collection stands out in particular for its fashion-inspired models as well as for the original color that made Ray-ban a legend in the industry. All models are identified by the Ray-ban signature engraved or silkscreen printed on the arms and stamped on the lenses.

Together with these new collection, Ray-ban has announced its continuous partnership with the Honda Racing F1 Team. Ray-ban's partnership with the team has proved to be a powerful medium for promoting the brand's iconic identity. In the Philippines, Ray-ban has taken this global direction and partnered with the Philippine Yachting Federation and is a sponsoring championship race last November 23 - 26 in the Subic International Raceway. Continuing it's tradition and entertainment, Ray-ban has announced the inclusion of the original Wayfarers for the Summer 2007 collection. Ray-ban Wayfarer designed and crafted the original creation from every point of view and would be available in the Philippines by April 2007.

Check the new collection before January 31, 2007 & get your 2nd pair for a great price! Inquire at all Department stores & Leading optical shops for details on the 1it's a 2nd pair.



WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 30, 2009 PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
LIFESTYLE 25

Chatting with Chiz

A fan gets her dream fulfilled with a face-to-face chat with Sorsogon Rep. Francis Escudero

"IT WAS MORE than fun," Jowana Ty tells us after.

By Lenie Ann Tan, INQ Correspondent
Photos by Tonny Dael

GIVE ME ONE GOOD REASON why anyone should idolize a politician.

Politicians alternate between sleeping and sleeping in the hallowed halls of the Batasan. They seem to accomplish little by way of passing bills. Instead, they debate the same populist issues over and over again, leaving other important bills unscrutinized. Our GDP figures show healthy growth, yet Juan de la Clint says he feels poorer. How's that for contradiction?

But once in a while, a bright, young and idealistic politician emerges from the quagmire. With his proficiency in both English and Tagalog, Patrick "Chiz" Escudero has been hailed as the voice of reason in the opposition. He speaks with deliberateness and clarity of thought. Chiz has got that triple-play package going for him: smart, sincere, and sexy.

Indeed, if you Google his name and explore blogs, you would find anonymous entries littered with the words gorgeous, cute and sexy. I see only heaved a guess that these anonymous blogs are penned by both sides of the gender spectrum. Given such coverage of the voting population, this guy is predicted to be in Malacañang someday soon.

This Christmas, 2BU received a request from Chiz's self-professed biggest fan.

"Hindi na ako nagulat na nasa Johnny Depp na mal BU, I would rather receive a picture with signature from Rep. Francis Joseph Escudero. There are a number of Chizmates out there, but I am one of his biggest fans."

Meet Jowana Ramos Jawana, 22, is in her junior year of taking up Bachelor of Science in Social Work at UP Diliman. She picked social work because of its practical applications of both Sociology and Psychology. The elder of two children, Jowana relishes debating with her father on national issues. Her father is with the administration party, while she finds herself taking the side of the opposition. Here she borrows Chiz's arguments.

She is extremely impressed with Chiz's sound logic and witty rebuttals. She also likes it that Chiz is one congressman who has proposed a House bill for social workers.

Jowana's Christmas wish was to have an autographed picture of Chiz. 2BU did one better. She got to meet him in the flesh. Chiz gamely agreed to meet up, saying, "Why don't you ask her where she's been and I'll be up schedule."

He was that generous. When asked afterward why he agreed to spend an afternoon with a fan, he quickly responded, "Because I can do it and it does not take anything from me—really. Because I am a fan, too, in my own way to relation to some people, and because I wanted to experience it, given that this is a first for me. I only hope that I did not disap-

CONTINUED ON

CHIZ and his biggest fan Jowana

CUPCAKE princess. White bubble bustier dress embellished with buttons, P1,290

LITTLE black dress. Black stretch bustier dress, P1,495

VENUS on earth. Fusion sun dress, P1,095

CAMOUFLAGE cutie. Camouflage bolero, P1,200; bubble skirt, P1,750

CHARCOAL charmer. Charcoal bustier bubble cocktail dress, P1,750

Barbie-doll dreams

Text by Pam Pastor
Photos by David Hanson
Makeup and styling by Tatin Yang

INSPIRED BY HIS MOTHER who was good at making clothes, five-year-old Abbie Abalos broke inside his neighbor's Barbie doll because he wanted to make her clothes.

When his mom found out what he did, she got mad and made him repair it. A family friend felt bad for little Abbie and some, Abbie had his own Barbie doll.

Abbie's mother passed away when he was six and he continued to hand-sew clothes for his little doll—it was his way of keeping her memory alive.

When he graduated from grade school, he started working as a sweet for a factory of blouses. "My first earning was P120. I used half of it to buy things for my stepsisters."

He started working in fast-food chains—he had stints in Jollibee and Chowking—but his passion for fashion continued to grow.

"Kahit may hahalo na ako, pumapasok ako as hairstyle para makapanood," he said. Abbie used to take the graveyard shift in factories to have breaks to sew.

After a strange (and fortunate) turn of events, Abbie ended up working in humming as a PR assistant to Angie Lanham. She now lives

soon discovered his talent for making clothes. His clothes are fun and wearable—with interesting details that make a statement.

"He started bringing clothes that he'd make for friends who would join beauty pageants. Soon, we were asking him to sew clothes for us. I think he has the talent."

Angie believes in his talent so much that she has decided to finance him, sending him to school at the fashion institute of the Philippines and helping him purchase materials. "He has the drive but he needs support. He just needs someone to guide him. Some people are born with but if they're not guided, it will all go to waste. I believe that just like a singer gets her break with one song, all Abbie needs is one break," Angie said.

We'd like to do our part in giving Abbie his break.

We put together a special shoot for Abbie at Serendra Residences High Street. His chosen model was Sara Fontes Ferrer, the reigning Binibining Pilipinas Tourism International.

Abbie says his greatest dream "is to become a fashion designer." We think he already is one—and the rest of the country needs to know so much.

Call Abbie at 0920 2338221 or 6003787 or e-mail abbie_jam12@yahoo.com

Future prom queen

Text by Bianca Consunji
Showbiz Correspondent
Photos by Jesus Barrera

WHEN WE GOT JAMILA Anne Lacsada's letter, we couldn't resist granting her wish.

She said, "I'm a high school junior at University of Santo Tomas, and I'm currently in search of the perfect prom ensemble. I know it's a bit early, but since it's my first year, I'm really excited about the dress, the makeup, and, of course, the shoes."

She continued, "I really want that night to be perfect. Will you be able to help me get a beautiful dress and some makeup?"

"The theme of my prom is country, but I don't know how I should go about it," she said.

It's important her pre-prom preparations (and because we believe that every girl should enjoy her prom) DSD asked help from makeup artist Tatin Yang, designer Aby Pearce and Aura Urban Salon to help Jamila get ready for her big night.

We decided to let makeup, Tatin decided

TATIN Yang working her magic

STYLIST Cris at work

in sun-bright colors in order to make her look precocious and fresh at the same time.

"She likes the color purple, which is great for the royalty theme, so I paired that color with a jewel green eyeline," Tatin said. "I decided to use bright colors to bring out her skin tone."

To complement the makeup, Aura senior hairstylist Cris Evangelista gave Jamila a half ponytail and curled the loose sections of her hair.

"It's prettier than a full bun, and the curls make her look young and fresh," he explained.

Young designer Aby Pearce will be working on a prom gown for Jamila.

"Lots of people will be wearing pink, so I'd like to violet gown with a full skirt to go with the country theme," Jamila said. She set a schedule to take Jamila's measurements and to fully plan the gown in time for the prom.

"I'm really excited for my prom now," Jamila said. "I loved the makeup Tatin did on me, the colors looked good. The curls Cris did on my hair looked so cute! And I can't wait to see my dress. I really want that night to be a blast, and having so many people help me plan it is amazing."

JAMILA before the trial hair and makeup

Grab a Christmas treat from Aura Urban Salon and 2bU!

Get a free eyelash treatment valued with any salon service purchased from December when you present your copy of the article anytime from Monday to Friday at 8/F Ayala Center Bonifacio 2/F, SMDC Suite 209, Salcedonian Avenue corner H. Velarde Street, for reservations and inquiries. McKinley Hills Venice, #3, Mckinley McGloral, Alabang-Zapote Road, Pasay City. Tel. 4879181.

Offer not valid with other discounts, existing promos, gown selection packages, and gift certificate coupon.

PROM READY look

E-mail the author at bianca@consunji.com

Contact Tatin Yang at http://www.facebook.com/pages/tatinyang/

Mission: makeover

Text by Bianca Consunji
Showbiz Correspondent
Photos by Sara Black

I THINK THAT AT LEAST ONCE in her life, every girl needs to experience getting glamoured up by top stylists and makeup artists, and having sets photographers make her look like she's never been plain a day in her life," said 20-year-old Shai Legarde, who sent us an e-mail with her wish to model for DSD.

When we first saw Shai, an editorial assistant for a teen magazine, our first thought was that she definitely didn't need a makeover. However, she explained, "It's the reason for parties and family reunions, so I wanted to learn how to pull off a holiday chic look—a

READY for her close-up

LAST-MINUTE touches on Shai by the hairstylist

for my front hair (about plain curls on top, down and then. I thought it would be great to be made over and given tips by the pros."

Lancôme makeup artist Gela Lazard opted for Shai's makeup to light, green colors.

"To bring out her features, I used natural shades to make her glow without being overpowering. Good by the makeup," Gela said. Hairstylist Chris Lodagan from Hair Salon Ulric curled Shai's hair and added volume at the roots to give Shai a more feminine look.

For the shoot, we asked Shai to wear a paisley-print Stefanie dress from fashionista Jedrich Issa some of the prettiest (easy-to-wear dresses) and a colorful beaded necklace.

During the shoot, photographer and occasional model Sara Black directed Shai and gave her tips on posing for photos.

Shai said, "I was really excited when I learned I was Sara Black who was going to photograph her. I heard from people who have worked with her that she's good at making her subjects feel comfortable in front of the camera, and I was lucky enough to experience that first-hand."

Shai, who initially seemed, well, shy eventually warmed up and started chatting with everyone enough. By the time it was her turn to face the camera, she seemed confident enough to toss back her head and smile. After

BEFORE

HAPPY brought out several books and magazines to inspire Kate.

LEARNING to make accessories

Happy to be of help to budding designer

ANGARI Christmas gift from Happy—a book titled "Jewelry Making for Fun and Profit"

A bead hobbyist gets some tips in the accessories trade from a hobbyist designer

Miracle comes to the rescue of an allowance-saving grandson

Perfume wishes

Text by Nino Mark M. Soldao
24/7 Correspondent
Photos by Tammy David

CHRISTMAS IS A TIME FOR GENEROSITY, sharing and giving-ing. We still have a week or so before Christmas, but accessory designer Happy David said time (like in real life) felt the true essence of Christmas last week.

Kate is 10 years old and for some she sounds a lot like a lot of time in her hands, she ends up making simple accessories every day. When she was able to sell several pieces to family and friends, she realized she could actually do this big time.

That is where 24/7 came in as the first-ever "Help Kate with her accessory business, we had the perfect Santa in mind: Happy David, owner and designer of his accessory line Girl Happy (and also a former 24/7 columnist dear!).

Last week, we brought Kate to the designer's (or Happy's) store in the second floor of Independencia Lifestyle Area in the Power Plant mall. While checking out the store, Happy briefed Kate about branding, the importance of merchandising, the basics of customer service and marketing (don't pout!) quite.

After the business talk, the two then walked over to Happy's workshop, which was just a corner's throw from Rockwell. There Kate saw an abundance of materials and "happy workers" endlessly stringing, knotting, cutting and sewing.

Happy gave Kate a starter kit, which included beads, components, findings and tools. After being taught beading and wire-working 101 by Happy and assistant Melanie, Kate chanted out a pair of earrings, a necklace and a bracelet.

Happy also practices with a jewelry stand for her own creations, plus a book called "Jewelry Making for Fun and Profit" so she could further her knowledge.

There's no doubt that Kate enjoyed and learned a lot from the crash course. Happy emphasized the importance of learning how to pay things together by exposing your eyes to various designs and inspirations. She also taught Kate how to do mental bounce to serve as inspiration when creating or planning a new look.

The greatest lesson Kate learned that afternoon was all about creativity. "You must be creative in making accessories, like using different materials apart from beads," she says. "You must also have your own style so people would easily recognize your creations."

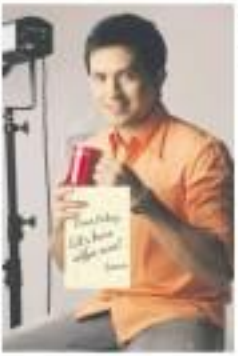
The last time Happy saw Kate was when, pound, she accepted the single beaded bracelet that the latter was wearing. "Those were the times some things I did when I was beginning since it was the same time!" Happy exclaims, and look at where she is now.

As said with determination, creativity and an eye for beauty, Kate might just make it big in the accessories business one of these days. And when she makes it big and has enough money, may be she can go back to school. And after school...she plans to take up Fine Arts—she can go full blast with her accessories business.

E-mail the author at multicolor_2bad@yahoo.com

HAPPY she gifted Kate with a jewelry stand for her own creations.

A date with Dennis



MODEL for a day Shai Lagarde

Chatting with Chiz

From page E1

good in any way."

Responsible he certainly didn't.

Soon's I let on his afternoon, we didn't feel like we were talking to the Honorable Representative from the first district of Sorsogon. Instead, it felt like we were in the company of a very articulate, very engaging and very knowledgeable friend. All topics were on the table. We talked about why ("he would not listen reportedly anymore") a half-eaten sandwich ("a Bitchin' Specter") and drapilon Aiko ("not that pretty"). He is obviously a gadgets man, up to date with the latest cameras, equipment. He was also raving about a Nokia E90 ("just $1,000!").

Chiz recounted his days in UP, from his interviews with a panel of judges during law school, to being part of a fraternity, to his student number. He said he just barely passed his academics as an undergrad and college, but excelled in law school. He claimed that apart from the required schoolbooks, he had read only 10 other books. "Hindi ako palabasa."

He then started giving us a synopsis of his favorite books, like "Dilawn with a Perfect Stranger." Wow, this guy could definitely spin a story. Little wonder that he gets his message across, whether it be a book summary or the session's most talked-about issues.

When we asked about political dreams, he gamely replied about a couple of his colleagues and poked fun at some. We asked him how he can live away so straight anymore. "Pag nasubukan ko na ng high, nag-Tagaytay ka. Pag nasubukan ka na ng Tagaytay, ok nang high ka."

The size said that despite his face-off with Mike Defensor on TV, they are good friends. A real gentleman, he stopped short of any personal jabs.

As a child, said Chiz, his dream was to be president. As he was driving through his law school interviews, he was asked the same question, but he answered in the negative. "Ah sabi ko hindi ko na siguro dream, "abte nanay-tatay ako," he replied.

Chiz was the perfect host, talking and listening in equal measure. For Jowaisa, Chiz represented an opportunity for her to be more politically aware and discerning. In her blog, she proudly posted afterward, "I did not lie!, and he did not make me lie!, that he was a politician."

True enough, Chiz wasn't out there to win votes. He didn't give us any official party lines. No agenda. None of the trappings of a traditional politician. He was a regular guy having coffee with a bunch of girls on a lazy Saturday afternoon.

When we ended, he was careful not to leave any part of his blueberry cupcake untouched, probably afraid that it would find its way to Pilar.

Party favors

By Pam Pareo

VOLUNTEERS FROM THE INQUIRER, Hinds Sr. Maids's Breakfast Club, Sacrosantos, Mcdonald's Metro and Chalkdrops Recreation Inn have been holding a Christmas party for around 45 street kids from Guadalupe, the CCP Complex and Quezon City every year for the past years.

Days before the party, we received an e-mail from Chiz de la Vega.

This year, aside from the usual street kids from the CCP Complex and Guadalupe, we will also be inviting street kids from Tacon Road. Sana maraming mag-volunteer tulong Ate at Ate. It will be a different experience to talk and share a few hours with these kids. You will learn a lot from them. They will change the way you look at life."

He listed other things needed for the party, aside from the usual volunteers: Ten (10) kilos of rice, 10 kilos of sugar, 10 kilos of assorted vegetables, 10 kilos of assorted fruits, 10 kilos of meat, 10 kilos of fish, 10 kilos of assorted candies, 10 packs of assorted biscuits, 10 packs of assorted juices, 10 packs of assorted soft drinks, 10 packs of assorted chocolate drinks, 10 packs of assorted instant noodles, 10 packs of assorted canned goods, 10 packs of assorted cookies, 10 packs of assorted chocolates, 10 packs of assorted crackers, 10 packs of assorted cand

Day of wishes

In the true spirit of the holidays, a thoughtful girlfriend asks for stuff for her boyfriend instead of herself

PATRICIA...Manila and Philippine music legend PJ Jacinto

Text by Bianca Consunji
24/7 Correspondent
Photos by Rudy Figueras
and Manuel Navarro

DECEMBER, NOT April, is the craziest month: it is the time when the latest gadgets and bright new trinkets are proudly displayed in store windows alongside snowflakes and tinsel, taunting those who could only look at them through a glass pane.

For some the month of December is an adventure. People pour cash into their bags, children score epic letters to Santa Claus, and friends kid each other about the gifts they want to get for Christmas.

However, there are some who have other more pressing concerns, and we saw this through the e-mails we received for 24/7 in the forums. While we got letters from people asking for cell phones, cameras and even laptops, we also received mail from people who only wanted to make their loved ones happy.

One such reader was Patricia de Leon, who said, "I have to admit there are necessary things that I want, but what it comes to things I need, my mind goes blank. There's nothing much a person really needs more than God, love, family, friends, food, clothing, shelter, relaxation and

SHARING an affectionate moment

VIVIAN Serrano helps Manila pick the right frames

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Immerse yourself in the glow of the Yuletide season as you make the Richmonde your haven for the holidays.

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New Year's Eve Bash

Count down to 2008 in the Exchange Bar from 9 pm until midnight for only PhP 500 net with unlimited drinks, a cocktail buffet and dazzling entertainment from multi-talented Grill Minors.

Festive Revelries

Have Yuletide get-togethers with style and ease with the Richmonde's Christmas Party Packages.

Inquire about the Happy Hour Party Packages at the Exchange Bar starting at PhP 8,500 net for 50 persons and the Banquet Party Packages starting at PhP 25,500net for 50 persons.

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Rates start at PhP 5,600 + + for an overnight stay with welcome and turn-down amenities at PhP 5,500 + + + .

Sweets and Treats at the Lobby Cafe

Treat and bestow goodies all wrapped and love and holiday cheer are available at their Christmas packaging until January 6, 2008.

The Richmonde Hotel

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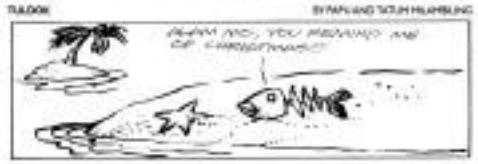
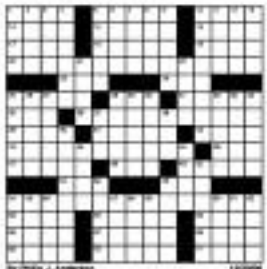


BEN — BY DANIEL SHELTON

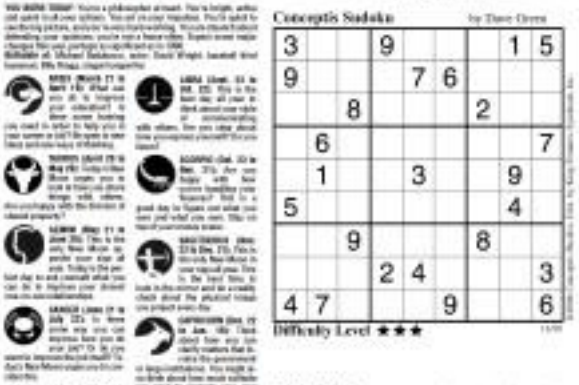
DAILY CROSSWORD



By Philip J. Anderson
Portland, OR

Saturday's Powder Sprinkle

HOROSCOPE



CONCEPTIS SU DOKU

Conceptis Sudoku — by Dave Green

3			9				1	5
9				7	6			
		8				2		
	6							7
	1		3			9		
5						4		
		9				8		
			2	4				3
4	7				9			6

Difficulty Level ★★★

HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.

Tips and program at www.sudoku.com

Answers to previous puzzle

8	3	9	6	5	4	1	7	2
7	1	6	9	2	3	4	5	8
5	4	2	1	8	7	5	9	3
2	5	4	5	7	1	8	3	9
1	6	3	2	6	9	7	5	4
3	9	7	4	3	8	6	2	1
9	8	1	3	4	6	2	8	7
4	7	6	8	9	2	3	1	5
6	2	8	7	1	5	9	4	6

Difficulty Level ★★

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RAZELLE another tattoo artist Lee Rosening does body art

THE FINAL tattoo

"She was high pain resistance," said Lee.

LEE uses sterilized professional equipment.

Log it now and explain soon. "Maybe next year," she quipped.

Lee Gabelsen's studio is at #30 Hunte St. Quo St., Pelican Market in Equity. Call 7555830 or at 4937301.

E-mail the author at mchrisdon_bbdt yahoo.com

The love tattoo

Text and photos by Miss Mark M. Sabbe
24x7 Contributor

RAZELLE AMMIE, 28, HAD HER FIRST tattoo 10 years ago—a tribal design that her schoolmates put on her cage. It didn't really represent anything, but she liked the design so much so she went on with it.

And recently, 2007 just gave her another piece of body art—a tribal design on her inner left wrist, with the initials of husband Jay and daughter Nicole.

She had been wanting to get the tattoo for a little over a year now. But since she was still working full time and she was busy with her newborn baby, it never made it to work.

Last week, Razelle finally had the tattoo—and on her birthday! Her hubby Jay, who also has a couple of tattoos on his right arm, was there to show moral support.

Thirty-four-year-old tattoo artist Lee Gableson performed the tattooing on Razelle. He has been doing it for 13 years, practicing on himself, but he often said friends back in his early inking days. With several images such as skulls and daggers on his own body, tattooing is Lee's main job. At his studio in Equity, he also offers other services like henna tattooing, body piercing, dreadlocks and tattoo removal.

The whole tattooing process took less than an hour. Because Razelle had her first tattoo years back, she had already forgotten about the pain involved. She was quickly reminded of it. The first time the needle came into contact with her skin, she winced in several and as possible. Lee, on the other hand, thought Razelle handled it pretty well, making it easier for him to perform the design.

Razelle had no regrets afterward. "I like it," she said of her new tattoo. She's not go-

Raffle dazzle

RAFFLES ARE A BIG PART OF COMING to Christmas parties. And so when Dr. Florence Villamonte, resident of St. Luke's Hospital's Institute of Radiology, wrote to us about their Christmas party, we knew we wanted to help make it easier to speak.

A hundred and fifty people were attending their party—"from doctors and secretaries to technologists and the residents," Florence told us. "any kind of raffle prize will add to the fun, excitement and joy to our Christmas party."

We couldn't say no. After all, those people spend the entire year taking care of people. A raffle prize is the least they deserve.

Angie Gardiner of Samsung won a 21-inch flat TV for the raffle.

"Thank you!" Florence said to a raw message. "May love circle us!"

The Institute of Radiology had its party last Thursday. Sidelines Lobster Inn was the TV. We know it's going to keep her relaxed and entertained on her days off.

Photo Feature

FLORENCE, Bahamas (who won the raffle) and Dr. Roberto Ramos, director of the Institute of Radiology

THESE CELEBS WANT A MERRY MOTO XMAS

What would make for a truly fun and funky holiday? How about hogging the latest, coolest Motorola phones? Here, celebrities tell us what they most want to see in their Christmas stocking this year.

"I love the way you simply just slide it and it flips open!"

Florence Villamonte and Cristina Cuccia have fashion sense all their own, but one love of Motorola's sleek graphic representation. Cris Rosa reminds us to, nothing dislike Christmas sparkle, enjoys the gold MOTOROLA V3i Delux & Fashion. Charming the character and unique design of Motorola with the multicolored style and attitude of Chris, this duo summer makes the perfect gift for any fashionista.

PH Rodriguez

Former rocker, TV host, commercial model, the multi-talented PH Rodriguez juggles his schedule well-one. He wears cologne that is so much a multi-tasker as he is—something he found in Motorola's V3i phones. The MOTOROLA V3i, for example, are perfect multi-tasker. It's entertaining it's cool, sleek, cool design. Just like PH.

"I like using the V3i for it's sleek, cool design. Whether it's business and leisure events, the perfect for starting friends from school. And I love the internal cam, it comes in handy when getting photos with the fellows."

"The RAZR V3i is so gorgeous to look and easy to navigate. It has great entertainment and phone management with iTunes. It has a very attractive calendar and datebook. It is the phone that you freely entrust to be your carrying book, single-handedly carrying has the next line become the iconic mobile phone of today."

"It has everything I want in a phone: a music player, camera, and most especially, a great sound quality for my MP3s."

Want to be like these celebrities and own your very own Moto phone? Join the Motorola 12 Gifts of Christmas promo by tuning in to your favorite radio station to hear Moto's catchy Christmas song. Wait for the DJ's cue to call and sing the Moto 12 Gifts of Christmas jingle and you might just win your dream Motorola mobile phone!

Product and Feature Projects

Here's to one on Motorola's chief rocker of the Motorola Quick Drawer and Sound. Projects they use the promotions have helped this Fall and Winter Months, which bring the season joyous to the culture. The Motorola Quick Drawer and the MOTOROLA Sound and Style, is not-limited to the exciting device creation and entertainment. The best features to use this holiday!

Hi-tech love

Kat wanted something for her two brothers, not for herself

By Pun Pazor
Photos by Archie Manuzang

MANY PEOPLE WROTE to us asking for computers. Some even had specific models in mind. But we chose Kat as Sulex and her brothers because their story is one of selflessness and sibling love.

Kat's not a devoted big sister.

She wrote to us about her wish for her two brothers, 23 year-old Mario Jr. and 18 year-old Jeremiah.

"I live with my two brothers, both still in college. Both of them do a lot of research and term papers for their classes, and often need to stay out late in computer shops or a relative's house to finish their work because we do not have a computer at home. I'd like to have a computer for my brothers. It doesn't have to be the epitome of the coolest gizz available. Just good enough to help them do their school work, print documents, surf the Internet, create graphics and maybe play some games on the side."

Although she wants to buy them a computer herself, she can't.

"I know it sounds odd, as computers nowadays are far easily acquired.

GENEROUS Gigi Mpa

KATRINA Sulex and her brothers

I have a steady job but the money I earn often goes to the tuition of my sister, other household expenses, or saving aside money for a computer in a really hard."

Wilson Gigi Agay, 40 for Sulex of Goldrich, heard about Kat and her siblings. She wanted to help. She said, "Kat don't always get the chance to grant someone's wish."

Last Saturday, Kat and her brothers were to Goldrich to get their computer. Thanks to a thoughtful employer and Goldrich, Mario and Jeremiah no longer have to stay out late to do their school projects.

"With a computer in the house, I wouldn't have to worry about them if they're out so late, and I'll be able to help them with their work as they're nearby," said Kat.

Goldrich is located at 404 Lt. Artiaga St., San Juan.

The gift of music

By Pun Pazor

AS THE MUSICAL DIRECTOR of the church band of the Church of the Lord Chalcedon Assembly in Mandaluyong, Chester Pimentel devotes a lot of time to studying new songs and preparing music sheets for other members of the band.

Chester takes his music with him everywhere and studies it at home, in church and even while stuck in traffic.

His brother, IJ, one of the singers of the band, told us about the Qtunjo-bought mp3 player Chester was using.

"It's old and the memory capacity isn't enough to store the songs the band is working on," he said.

The band members take their faith and their responsibility seriously. They have been working extra hard serving the good music to their church service.

IJ mastered a new mp3 player for Chester—and we agree. Anyone who sees music for such a good purpose deserves the best technology.

Because our friends at Samsung have been telling us about their newest music players, we know where to go (duh!).

"Yes!" Angie Lindayen said after hearing about IJ's wish for his brother.

When IJ surprised Chester with Samsung's YP-Z5H a 5-GB music player

SAMSUNG'S YP-Z5H

He received a surprise and he paid it forward

loaded with features, his eyes widened. He appreciated the player's sleek design and 5-gig capacity. "I love it!" he said.

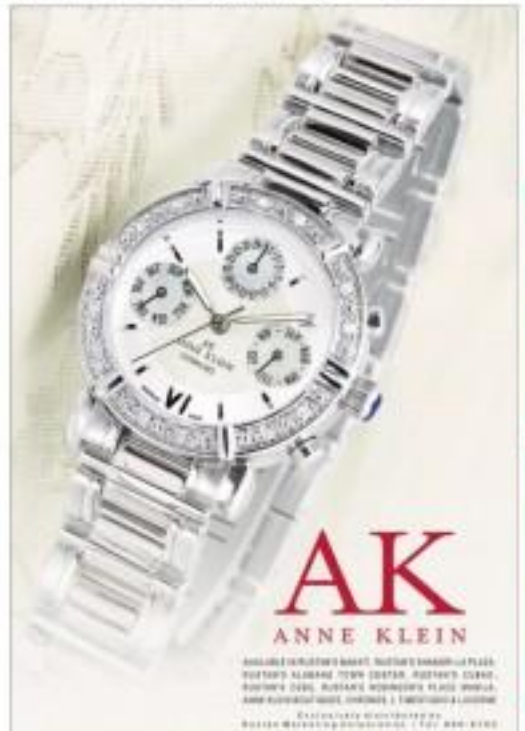
The gift of Samsung is not just a gift for one person—it's a gift for a band and a church that has a strong passion for offering praise to the Lord.

It is Zach's hope that after coming to the course of our studies, they would put it forward. This is our core dream and one that we have not overlooked.

In Chester's case, we didn't have to. He passed on his old mp3 player to his mom, who is now discovering the joys of having her music on the go.

Samsung YP-Z5H is available in your favorite gadget stores.

MUSIC master Chester Pimentel



GOING around in the car sponsored by Sulex

Day of wishes

From page F1

good opportunities. I've got more than enough of those."

"I'd like to pitch in too, someone else's need. My boyfriend Aiselle Fontanilla, a great guy who I've been close to for roughly four years, is stays in his an siblings. He is their family's main breadwinner, and because of this he doesn't have the luxury of spending for some of his needs. Most of his money goes to bills already."

"His simplest need is a new pair of eyeglasses. He makes do with a pair that doesn't suit his needs, even if he ends up having giant headaches at night. One time, he admitted to me that he has trouble going home at night time because he could barely see anything in the dark. He also needs a new pair of office shoes, but because his money usually goes to his siblings, he doesn't want to spend on new ones. It also wouldn't hurt if you could get him a new battery."

Patricia continued, "When you ask him, though, what he really needs, he'd say he needs a new guitar. Aiselle plays for a death metal band, but because of his family's needs, he only managed to buy a cheap guitar, which is now falling apart."

With the help of SU Jacinto, Nivian Sarabia, Jasper Lee of The Leather Gallery, Ana Urban Salon and Wake cars, we were able to make Patricia's wishes for Aiselle come true.

Our first stop was at SU Jacinto's office in Makati, where he was meeting with Aiselle's new acoustic guitar, which he had also signed. After giving him the guitar, IJ and Aiselle talked about their music and jammed for a few minutes.

Wishes granted

IJ, who was expressing a review, was surprised to find out that Aiselle had been playing the guitar for 12 years, and had played for a fairly famous death metal band. "This guy's pretty good!" he exclaimed. He also taught Aiselle a few guitar tricks, including using his cell phone to play some chords. "I'm the first person to use a cell phone for playing the guitar," he said.

Next stop was The Leather Gallery in Pasawood, where Aiselle chose a pair of shoes he needs. Aiselle spent a few minutes looking at some styles, and settled for a sturdy pair of black leather shoes from Bourbon. After that, we climbed into the Volvo S80 Jinkyoh spun, served our transportation for the day), and went to SM Megamall for his new glasses.

In between stops, Patricia talked about her

GOLF-SEARCHING at The Leather Gallery

SHOPPING around during the spree

relationship with Aiselle.

"We met in a Political Science class at SU," she said. "Aiselle's intelligent and outspoken, but when he saw that I beat him in class recitations, he got interested and somehow found a way to get my number and text me."

Vivian Sarabia, who owns Sarabia World of Optics, was also very pleasant to meet. "Your glasses are too small for your face," she told Aiselle. "And we'll have to upgrade your prescription, it's probably why you're getting headaches."

She busied around the shop, asking Aiselle questions about his lifestyle and picking out frames. When she went back to her work area, she had over a dozen frames for Aiselle to try on. Aiselle, who worked long hours at the computer solving English textbooks for Koreans, needed glasses that would make people take him seriously and at the same time be able to wear them to his gigs. "Your glasses have to reflect your personality," she said. "Says old house just won't do."

After trying on a number of frames, Aiselle and Patricia settled on a matte copper pair. "When I asked my friends in pads, I knew we found the perfect glasses for him," Patricia said after. "The highlight of this day was the trip to Vivian Sarabia's store. He was just blown away by how kind she was and how she didn't mind the price of the frames she was picking out. He even told me he wanted her to be 'among us on our wedding.'"

For the last stop, we went to Ana Urban Salon in Shaw to smooth his Aiselle's hair out. Since he wanted to maintain the length of his hair, senior stylist Rose Tales layered Aiselle's wavy hair to clean up his look and make it easier to fix. "My hair looks basically the same, but it feels lighter now," Aiselle said.

Payback time

"On the way to the mall, Aiselle videoported to me, 'Maghanda ka mamaya,' I was worried that he didn't like it and we'd fight over the whole thing, but we didn't. As soon as around and kept asking what he could buy for me—pero ano nga ba naman," Patricia said.

"We told me that it was one of the most memorable times together, and asked if we could have a copy of all the pictures the photographers took of us. He'll have them framed in there one kids and grandkids. He really deserved all he got and much more. He's been under so much pressure for the past months," she added. "It was a great day for both of us. I got hired of every eyed just thinking about it."

EASTWOOD'S done here

GETTING a haircut at Ana Urban Salon

ENTERTAINMENT

Editor Bonnie S. Velarde

METRO MANILA FILM FESTIVAL

Inquirer Entertainment is running the MMFF guide to help moviegoers plan their holiday cinema. Join The Festival starts Dec. 25.

Liwalig

Stars: Cesar Montano, Bembol Roco, Johnny Delgado, Celia Rodriguez, Rebecca Luciferio, John Regala, Kathy Santos

Directed by Cesar Montano

A serial killer (Delgado) is on the loose in the city—outrunning the cops with his dueling and sublessons. The murderer crosses paths with a rich citizen (Montano) and his girlfriend (Chui) and, owing to a mysterious connection to the past, the murderer stalks them. They finally meet in the latter's ancestral home, where a bloody killing spree erupts. Action director-producer Montano follows up his previous Metro entry (the World Film 10 drama "Daughters in Satin" in 2004) a bilingual "suspense" flick. "We put in a surprising twist at the end," Montano says.

Kasal, Kasali, Kasalo

Stars: Judy-Ann Santos, Ryan Agoncillo, Gi-as Pamilar, Gloria Diaz, Ariel Ureta, Soliman Cruz, Julluss Polirazo

Directed by Jose Javier Reyes

Polar opposites, a brusque gal (Santos) falls for a softie guy (Agoncillo). When the oddball pair decides to tie the knot, meddling in-laws (Diaz, etc.) and, worse, his pushy ex-wife (Cruz) are in store. Will their love survive the challenges of married life? Director Reyes describes the film (Cinema project as a "rom-romantic-comedy." "Judy-Ann's on all," he points out.

If horror scenes with Pamilar were all we read, Director Chris Aspillaga's melodrama like a true-life movie and daughter. After shooting a pivotal scene with the ensemble cast, Reyes reportedly exclaimed: "You're exhilarating! You're all so good!" According to Agoncillo's manager Noel Ferrer, to help pull off the film's hot horror was the feast of the lead stars' friendship with and loved one for the director.

CARLOMI Aguilar says she has been going out with Dennis (inset) for over four years.

Dating Dennis

By Nini Valera

IT'S NOT EASY TO BE DATING A CELEBRITY, especially if it's a hot actor like Dennis Trillo.

This beauty queen Carlene Aguilar found out after she became official "dobler" and entertainment-conscious breakfast recently.

Talking to Inquirer Entertainment on Saturday, Carlene, 29, admitted that she and Dennis had been seeing each other for more than four years.

"It doesn't mean we're committed," she stressed. "We're committed only to our careers."

But predictions with the press she described as "magulo (messy)." She explained, "I'm not really those bit, and I'm not used to this."

Carlene pointed out that she had been inv-

PRINCESS Curtiss from Bataan

HOJO de Dios of Olongapo

VETERAN Jun Lopito, second from left, plays with passage—no less.

Over the top with Rockista '06

By Pocholo Concepcion
Contributor

CORPORATE SPONSORship is doing a good job helping not only rock star wannabes, but veteran musicians as well.

The "Coke Rockista 2006" singing contest search finals held recently at the Music Museum featured not guitar-ist Jun Lopito as a judge and Director.

A prominent figure of the 1970s Pinoy rock scene as frontman of Sampaguita, original member of the Jocks and long-time playing partner of Pepe Smith, Lopito was asked to have been struck by an eye ailment that caused him to lose interest in music. There was solid talk among talented discussing groups that Lopito had bequeathed his many old Fender Stratocaster to his daughter.

Relaxed jurors

But there he was on stage as the "frank and fair" judge, fully recovered, playing lead guitar and leading the house band, Sandwich, in accompanying the top two contenders for the grand prize.

The board of judges—composed of Jocks front man Dodong Nebrida, former Pinoy Boys member Ali Sotto (vocals) Myra Beatriz Encarnacion (bass) (keys as jazz soloist Skyler), image consultant Josh Lucero and Radioactive Sago Project leader Lourd De Veyra, appeared easy to knock—possibly on account of Lopito's excellent handling of the music which, of now, pushed the contenders to give their best performances.

Adopting a setup similar to "Pinoy Idol" and "Starhunt 2006," event host

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Dating Dennis

From page G1

quoted in TV reports and **cubicle** mates every time she talked about Dennis.

"Sir, I won't say anything na lang," she said. "Inisip ko I have (talked about) it and we both agreed to just keep quiet."

The beauty queen, who was recently named Miss Intercon 2006 and will be crowned in Toronto tomorrow, said she and Dennis had met when they both trained as part of ABS-CBN's "Star Circle" in 2001.

"I was being trained for news; Dennis, for acting," Carlene recalled. "But 80, 90 [Johnny Manahan, Star Studio manager] asked me to train for acting. That's how Dennis and I got together."

While his show his career did not pan out, Dennis became a supervisor.

But Carlene is pretty much in the limelight as a beauty titlist—Miss Philippines Earth 2000, Miss Chinatown 2004, and Mr. Pilipinas World 2005 (she got the highest number of any votes from global viewers).

She also appears in TV commercials, like the recent Ian Miguel Shoe ad.

She never planned on being a beauty queen, according to Carlene.

"It was my friend's dream [for herself]," she said. "That's why she entered my name for Miss Philippines Earth. I was hesitant at the time, and was not fond of dressing up."

Its second runner up in the Miss Chinese International pageant, Carlene got to work in Hong Kong as an actress and commercial model for seven months.

But I got homesick," she said, "and I wanted to finish my studies."

She returned to the Philippines in early 2005, only to find out that she would have to wait a few months to enroll again at the University of the Philippines, where she was taking up law. Studies. While waiting, she joined the Mr. Pilipinas contest and was picked to represent the country in the Miss World pageant.

"That's how it happened," she said. "I felt sayang joining another contest after I had won the Miss Earth. But somehow, I was convinced to do it and I'm happy for the experience."

She also welcomes the clips that came as part of her wings.

"Imagine, I only had to pay some lip service for all my travels," she said. "The rest came as part of the package."

Beyond the glamour

Life as a beauty queen won't end after the year's reign, according to Carlene. She has joined the Beauty Ambassadors of the Philippines Foundation, which works to gather beauty queens to help finance community trips for international pegeants.

But most important than that task is the foundation's goal to help non fortunate children.

"Our priority is really charity," Carlene said of the organization, headed by reigning Miss International Precious Lara Quigaman. "As beauty queens, we are tasked up to an role models. As such, we can focus on charity work and help other people, like the victims of Typhoon "Reming" to Bicol."

AUTHOR KHANNA MOVES

"Diane Ng, Brother" popul
ing management" up in
producers lined up to offer

Also, it turned out to be
much, too soon, and her
performed phlegmatically
office.

Dina comes her second f
and it's instructive to n
time around, the mov
pushed, not avidly as a K
her as a comedy about
tonal test.

Once Sitsit, twice sh
goes ...

Regal fields four entri

At the year-end Sitsit
it's interesting to see tha
seen present-based shows
movie-making conglomera
fend off foes.

In past editions of the f
used to lean and lean alm
entry financing and partn
now that the Mia bird's ra
adjusted, Regal's entrepr
piled up TV hosts all of th
it's helped Dimaro—"C
"Shake, Rattle and Rol
Jinkerstuff" and "Super Sha

This is a more forthright
leans. But industry observe
the fact that studio-initi
strong hold on the Festival
smaller and more shrewd
we have a hard time gettin
local competition, and th
from all of the perks assoc

This is ironic and not
division because the big
draw is how the Filipino f
has been given a strong ch
to digital and alternative
For them to be poorly re
the Metro Film Festival
shame.

'Kaul, Kaul, Kaulit'

Another festival entry, "
Kaulit," has its own unique
its screenplay, written b
Bautista, won second pri
Development Foundation
prize) selected to represe
Asia and was bought for S
Cinema some 18 long year

The fact that it's taken

Over the top with Rockista

From page G1

Raimund Marasigan of Inq
tabloid each member of the
of judges for comments and
petitions based on the po
winners.

The contenders, Princess
la Pena Bautista and Rajah
of Dhonjun, sang two s
each. Candie interpreted U
dulo's "Endless Love" Whi
and Bamboo's "Singit." De
rendered versions of Isaac
"Butterfly Carnival" and R
Ayers's "Pare ng Kabuhayan."

All the judges had gla
comments for De Dios, w
Boro-like stance and confid
seemed to have given hi
judge, Jim Paredes enter
lowed by some criticism: "C
dance is everything, but D
got to be method to the
soul."

Don't push unless...

Pura was referring to De
tendency to go over the top
his energy. Although he w
have had the "Rockista" a
consisting of a dreamy yet
rolling voice, combined wit
right moves, De Dios must
him to acquiring a sense of
soul, or knowing when his le
excitement has hit the max.

When he was proclaimed
ner, De Dios got to jam with
to, who had Sitsit by his si
sang "Hiraya Manis." Sean
but sure, De Dios didn't know
lyrics to the song, which hop
to his Pinoy rock's rallying
them. Either he was too ta
or too flustered with just ha
many P400,000 plus a ven
recording and promotional
have he could drink.

In any case, the idea of G
promoting Bojo de Dios as n
ser endorser and symbol o
now blend of "rock meet"
not be pushed without the
guiding hands of producer
who have invented their
playing and breathing the so

Somebody really good
always be for De Dios' side
he goes overage. Somebody
Jun Lapiz should take ov
duo.

Therein lies a show biz tale

VIEWFINDER
Yeshe C. Torre

This Keanna Reeves starrer is now billed as a comedy about female impersonators

KEANNA REEVES: Too much too soon?

decade for the outstanding screenplay to test the light of this decade's crop of movie moguls to see if there is to be just one, and not four. Good projects finally still out, so hang in there!

Of course, we don't have at this stage how much of Bautista's work has "survived" the cause of time and circumstance. We'll have to wait for the Movie Film Fest to appear, but it is meant to find out. "Kasal, Kasali, Kasalo" stars Judy Ann Santos and Ryan Agoncillo.

Princess Diana remembered

Princess Diana is in the news again, albeit second-rendition about her most tragic and (eminently lamented death some 10 years ago.

Newly discovered or confirmed details about her fatal car accident have served to once more focus the public's attention on her glamourous but troubled life, and her charismatic persona.

There's talk about a new Diana film this, and producers are looking around for a look-alike actress to play the late, lamented "Princess of the People." Any suggestions?

One for a Paris Hilton, who looks like a pissed Diana. Wow, if only she can be taught to speak the Queen's English—and how to act!

Mel Gibson 'forgiven'

After Mel Gibson was arrested for drunken driver the (self-)arrest and letting loose with some unsavory anti-Semitic slurs, some Hollywood observers coldly advised him to kiss his career there goodbye.

Not so fast. Others opined that the big star harbouring the viewing public's predominant store of maternal forgiveness would be the (non-)first chewing of (his own's latest film, "Apocalypto."

Well, the film has finally appeared in the States, and it looks like the public has indeed decided to forgive Gibson for his anti-semitic(-ish).

Proof positive? "Apocalypto" has topped the weekend box office, beating rivals like "The Holiday" and "Happy Feet."

The sobering news is that "Apocalypto" grossed only $14 million, box by US show biz standards. But, first place is first place, so Gibson's career's successful cathouse will cause be pursued.

It's good showing was particularly remarkable because it has no star value, is set in the distant past, and its characters speak in a "dead" Mayan language.

SHANG CINEPLEX
TENACIOUS D
HAPPY FEET
THE NATIVITY
CASINO ROYALE
A GOOD YEAR
PROMIERE THEATRE
Catch the Cineplex Special
Shangri-La Plaza

GREENHILLS CINEMAS
THEATRE MALL
PROMENADE
1 2 3 4 5
TENACIOUS D
HAPPY FEET

ARANETA CENTER
GateWay MALL FarmersPlaza
THE ONLY CINEPLEX IN THE COUNTRY
Araneta CINEPLEX 10
SPIRIT TRAP
TENACIOUS 'D'
THE NATIVITY
ALL THE KING'S MEN
BORAT
HAPPY FEET
CASINO ROYALE
RANG YAPA
ALL THE KING'S MEN
MALL 5
1 SPIRIT TRAP
2 CASINO ROYALE
3 TENACIOUS 'D'
4 SHAOLIN vs EVIL DEAD
5 KAMASUTRA 3
ARANETA COLISEUM
PBA PHILIPPINE CUP
CARTOON NETWORK LIVE: CARTOONIVAL

glorietta GREENBELT Ayala Center Cebu Ayala Malls
AT THE CINEMAS
G1 1 BORAT 2 HAPPY FEET 3 SPIRIT TRAP 4 REVENGE
G4 1 LITTLE MISS SUNSHINE 2 TENACIOUS D 3 CASINO ROYALE 4 ALL THE KING'S MEN 5 A GOOD YEAR 6 HAPPY FEET 7 THE NATIVITY
GB1 1 TENACIOUS D 2 HAPPY FEET
GB3 1 A GOOD YEAR 2 HAPPY FEET 3 THE NATIVITY 4 TENACIOUS D 5 LITTLE MISS SUNSHINE
ATC 1 HAPPY FEET 2 A GOOD YEAR 3 THE NATIVITY 4 SPIRIT TRAP 5 TENACIOUS D
ACC 1 DEATH TRAP 2 MRS. EVANS 3 FRANCIS 4 HAPPY FEET
M2 1 HAPPY FEET 2 A GOOD YEAR 3 THE NATIVITY 4 SPIRIT TRAP 5 TENACIOUS D
ARMAGEDDON
Longer Than Life! No Commercials Breaks!
ARMAGEDDON
THE END... IS ONLY THE BEGINNING
Featuring The Crown Tag Match
JOHN CENA & BATISTA VS. KING BOOKER & FINLAY
GLORIETTA 1 CINEMA 3
DECEMBER 22 - 7 PM
DECEMBER 23 & 24 - 11:30 AM & 2:30 PM

At the Activity Center
GLORIETTA
TOWN CENTER
AYALA CENTER CEBU
MARKET! MARKET!
Christmas Carols at One World String Orchestra
Christmas Goodies Bazaar
Ayala Museum
BPI Express Credit
win'emall
PLUS! FREE P500 Ayala Malls GC!

PARIS Hilton is the subject of one of Reuters' Pictures of the Year 2006. This was taken at the 59th Cannes Film Festival in May.

Britney Spears, Paris Hilton this year's 'viral video' girls

LONDON—THE PUBLIC'S APpetite for those "Oops! ... I Did It Again" moments involving pop princess Britney Spears shows no sign of waning as she usurped the number one celebrity viral video this year.

A clip of Spears bumping and talking incoherently about her belief in time travel won unwanted attention from millions of Internet users to make top spot—formally, said ViralVideoChart.com on Monday.

Live TV footage of Spears' former husband Kevin Federline apparently getting a text message informing him the pop singer had filed for divorce was second with nearly two million hits.

Viral videos is the term used to describe clips that gain huge popularity after being posted on the Internet, spreading like viruses through e-mails, blogs and instant messages.

ViralVideoChart.com says it scans several million blogs a day to see which clips are being talked about most and compiles a daily list of the 20 most-viewed videos.

"Swimsuit" co-star Michael Richards' racist outburst was third in the 2006 chart with over a million hits just four weeks after it was first posted online.

Richards sparked a public outcry for spewing a torrent of racial slurs at hecklers during his stand-up act at the Laugh Factor comedy club in Hollywood on Nov. 17.

The incident was captured in digital camera video footage that was widely circulated on the Internet and was broadcast on TV newscasts these days later.

Actress Lindsay Lohan talking lots then generously about socialite Paris Hilton was fourth, while a video of Hilton crashing a Bentley claimed fifth place.

Actress Britney Brightly's rendition of "Raindrops Keep Falling on my Head," played on her work, featured on the Ellen DeGeneres Show was number six just ahead of model Karlie Price and husband Peter Andre's video for their debut single "A Whole New World."

Hilton makes a comprehensive number eight singing happy birthday to the 30-year-old founder of Playboy magazine Hugh Hefner, with a video of actress Pamela Anderson in nine.

Sharon Osbourne's tirade at a knickerless Rebecca Loos on Celebrity 8 Diaries rounds out the chart. Reuters

BRITNEY Spears Top hit online

Animated Seinfeld

NEW YORK—Jerry Seinfeld is trying out his animated side in a new film called "Bee Movie," due out in November 2007.

In the film from DreamWorks, he's the voice of a bee who leaves the hive and discovers that humans have been stealing the insects' honey.

JERRY SEINFELD

"I think ... I'm bringing a different humor sensibility to an animated movie," Seinfeld, who is also writing and producing the movie, told Newsweek magazine. "There's a lot of attitude in the jokes, the same way it was on the show."

The comedian, who starred in the NBC sitcom "Seinfeld," still does standup and has three children under age 6. He said his home life provides him with tons of new material.

"There's no way to even describe the gold mine in the comedic sets that family life is," he told Newsweek. "I can't believe I missed it for so long. If my life was total misery—which it's not, it's heaven, I love my wife, my family is great most—but if it was total misery it would still be worth it for the jokes." AP

Soft-spoken 'Survivor'

NEW YORK—His former contestants revealed Neil Boone, "godfather" of the CBS series "Survivor: Cook Islands," with the $1 million top prize in a dozen hours that pitted foe vs foe.

Boone, a management consultant who was the soft-spoken strategist who in the 12th edition of the game, beat Cristina "Tina" Lueth, the effortless athlete who dominated physical challenges as the game neared its end.

With the money on the line, it was a 5-4 vote. The finale aired Sunday night.

"It's the first time I've ever felt bad that somebody didn't win," host Jeff Probst said. "It was so evenly matched."

Boone, a 31-year-old management consultant who lives in San Francisco, California, was the holder with degrees from Stanford University and Yale Law School. He controlled the strategic aspect of the game, particularly after he found a hidden piece of jewelry that guaranteed him one-time immunity from being voted off the island.

"The key to winning the game is maximizing the good luck and minimizing the bad luck," he said later. AP

YUL Kwon, winner of "Survivor: Cook Islands," and program host Jeff Probst after taping the season finale in L.A.

ANOTHER entry in Reuters' Pictures of Year 2006: a diva worthy of model Eva Herrmann, at the unveiling ceremony of "The Da Vinci Code," also in Cannes last May.

CHRISTINA Aguilera onstage during her "Back To Basics Tour" concert in Saalsa Arena, in Prague, last weekend.

No takers

LOS ANGELES—Recordings of four songs by a 12-year-old girl who later became Judy Garland did not sell at auction on Sunday when bidders failed to reach the required minimum bid.

The two auction records Starr not been heard in public and are believed to be the first made by Garland, who was born Frances Gumm. Her shot to fame after singing in "The Wizard of Oz" at age 16 in 1939, and was 47 when she died in 1969 of a prescription drug overdose.

Bidding in Beverly Hills auctioneer Profiles in Hollywood reached $22,500, which was above the required minimum. The recordings, including "The Good Ship Lollipop," had been expected to reach $30,000 to $40,000.

Profiles & Butterfield spokesperson Lori Burgan said the owner may decide to go to auction again or keep the 1933 records. The woman found the records in 1968 as her family cleared out a Beverly Hills house where Garland once lived. Reuters

AUSTRALIAN pop superstar Kylie Minogue, left, performs with her sister Dannii at a concert during Kylie's Showgirl Homecoming tour in Melbourne last Saturday.

BEYONCE, right, during the 3rd Annual "Fashion Rocks" concert at Radio City Music Hall in New York, is one of the more stunning from Agence France-Presse (ok yes: it was taken on Sept. 7.

ALSO it on AFP and also taken in September in this one of Madonna at the Amsterdam Arena in her "Confessions Tour."

ENTERTAINMENT

TAKE FIVE

Under the sea with *Isabel Oli*

By Oliver M. Palamiuen
Contributor

ISABEL OLI SHARES THAT she has a lot of young fans, and that she's a follower of a lot of cartoon series and movies that appeal to them. She even wanted to learn computer animation and related techniques a few years ago, but on her scheduled departure to Singapore where she would pursue a second course, she landed a role in a TV commercial.

Minor appearances followed, and eventually, her "dream job" allowed her to be friends with fellow show biz personalities, including current boyfriend Dustin Celeste.

Oli now plays Alena, one of several mystery characters in the GMA 7 fantasy series "Valentina." She finds working with Gretta on the same project comfortable, especially now that they're inseparable.

The couple shop, go to church and swim together as often as they can. It's a serious relationship, the 24-year-old actress said, but they have no plans to tie the knot just yet. "Maybe that'll be three or four years from now," she said. "We have to save up for that, and enjoy what we have right now."

Still on about this development of your "Valentina" character Alena.

I'm human for now, but eventually, I'll be having super powers. I don't know who I am yet. But the character has shown that she has

(MORE P.C)

Analysts: DiCaprio film may hurt diamond demand

NEW YORK—"BLOOD DIAMOND," the Warner Bros. thriller that hits movie theaters on Friday, could spark public concern about illicit "conflict diamonds" and hurt demand during the key holiday shopping season, analysts said on Monday.

But any financial impact on retailers should be modest and brief, they added.

The film, starring Leonardo DiCaprio, highlights the precious gem's role in Sierra Leone's civil war during the 1990s. So-called conflict diamonds, or blood diamonds, refer to stones mined in war zones and sold illicitly to fund war, insurgencies and human rights abuses.

Star power

James Hurley, an analyst with research firm Telsey Group, said the movie will likely affect movie stars with far star powers and advertising push.

But he doubts people will stop buying diamonds, which would hurt retailers such as Zale Corp., Tiffany & Co. Inc., Blue Nile Inc. and Signet Group Plc, which operates the Kay Jewelers chain, and diamond processor De Beers Group, which is 45-percent owned by mining company Anglo American Plc.

"What a diamond means and what it stands for has been ingrained in people's psyches for decades, if not centuries. There's a pretty powerful attachment to ... diamonds with just one film," Hurley said.

CL King analyst William Armstrong said the movie would likely deter buying patterns for a small group of shoppers.

But they figure that any financial impact to retailers should not last long

Bloody trail

"Has been much that would be ... It'd be very surprised if it was a material amount," Armstrong said, adding that large retailers already have status programs in place to prevent or minimize the possibility that their diamonds have left a bloody trail.

To help prepare for a possible public backlash, the World Diamond Council, a trade group, earlier this year listed a crisis public relations firm to design a campaign screening the industry's efforts at reducing the number of blood diamonds. The campaign included full-page advertisements in national and international newspapers and an educational website www.diamondfacts.org.

High-end retailer Tiffany, which said it takes extra steps to responsible sourcing of all materials used to make its jewelry, said it

(REUTERS)

WEEKEND BOX OFFICE

Top 10 movies at the North American box-office for the three-day weekend beginning Dec. 15

The Pursuit of Happyness - Columbia Pictures

This Last	Title	Gross	#Th
1	The Pursuit of Happyness	$27.0 mln	1
2	Eragon	$23.4 mln	1
3	Charlotte's Web	$12.3 mln	1
4	Happy Feet	$8.6 mln	6
5	The Holiday	$5.2 mln	2
6	Apocalypto	$7.7 mln	2
7	Blood Diamond	$6.3 mln	2
8	Casino Royale	$5.7 mln	5
9	The Nativity Story	$4.7 mln	3
10	Unaccompanied Minors	$3.7 mln	2

This Week Last Week Weeks in Release
New release

Based on studio estimates compiled on Sunday

(REUTERS)

MMTA
METRO MANILA THEATERS ASSOCIATION

MOVIE GUIDE
NOW SHOWING

MTRCB ▶ R-13 | Strictly for 13 years of age and up
APPROVED WITHOUT CUT

OFFICIAL ENTRY TO METRO MANILA FILM FESTIVAL 2006
OPENS DECEMBER 25, 2006
CESAR MONTANO

SUNSHINE CRUZ CELIA RODRIGUEZ JOHNNY DELGADO
LIGALIG
MARVIN AGUSTIN DANIEL ALDAVERAS JOHN VILLARIA
REBECCA LUPOTAN YOSHIKO HOSHINAKA KRYSTAL BRIMNER
ALYSSA ALCELES & DENISE GARCIA
CESAR MONTANO

IN THEATERS DECEMBER 25
LITO LAPID as Lazo Guerrero
MARK LAPID as Julio Valverde
MAYNARD LAPID as Zigmar

TATLONG BARAHA
PRIMALA BARANDA GERLIE SEVILLA JACKIE RICE
RUSSEL MOLE and MONSOUR DEL ROSARIO
OFFICIAL ENTRY TO THE METRO MANILA FILM FESTIVAL 2006

DiCaprio film may hurt ..

...encourage consumers to ask jewelers how their apparel offers assurance responsible mining.

"The film 'Blood Diamond' serves as a horrific reminder of the terrible costs of uncontrolled diamond trading ... and we are hopeful it will contribute to ongoing international efforts to secure countries' rivers and impose clarity," Tiffany told Reuters in an e-mailed statement.

In 2002 diamond production companies and more countries in...

...evolved in the mining and trade of diamonds agreed on the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme, which is a process designed to prevent blood diamonds from entering the mainstream diamond market.

Good job

"The industry has worked hard to keep conflict diamonds from the mainstream markets, including certifying stones as conflict-free," wrote ThinkEquity Partners

Under the sea with Isa

From page 01

...roles. I hope people will look forward to that development, and what will happen to Tristan. Samantha (Cherry Pie Picache) Joaquin Fernandez, Paulo's character, is good to me, but he isn't to others.

How similar or different is Mona Kristine previous TV portrayals?

I saw in "Saan," with Richard Gutierrez. I played this love interest to his male characters. Aptly-put, kinship ng). Playing Mona is re...

...really similar because she's always maltreated. But now, she fights back.

When you were offered the role, were you aware of what they had in store for you?

Actually, when I accepted the role, they told me, "Don't worry, you're a good character here." Other than that, they couldn't tell me more. It's hard...sometimes I feel that I know the character, but I trust the people involved. For me, it's really challenging and fun. The people here are really fun to work with.

POWER PLANT CINEMA
Rockwell Center, Makati City Tel. No. 893-60-42

SAVING PRIVATE RYAN (R-13) 1:00, 4:00, 8:00	HAPPY FEET (G) 1:15, 3:30, 5:30	A GOOD YEAR (PG-13) 1:30, 3:45, 8:15
TENACIOUS D IN: THE PICK OF DESTINY (R-13) 12:30, 6:30, 10:30	SPIDER TRAP (R-13) 1:45, 4:00 MUNICH (R-13) 6:30, 9:00	THE NUTCRACKER STORY (NUTCRACKER) (G) 12:00, 2:30, 5:00, 7:30

MTRCB ▶ G ALL AGES ADMITTED

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AN INCONVENIENT TRUTH

Exclusively at SM Cinema Cebu and SM Cinema Clark

GRIDIRON GANG

Exclusively at SM Cinema Manila

movietime

Film Festival

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Which do you think will be the biggest film festival hit of 2006 once again before the year ends

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MOVIE SCHEDULES EFFECTIVE AND SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE

GALLERIA

1 CASINO ROYALE – THX
2 HAPPY FEET
3 SA ILALIM NG COGON
4 SHAOLIN VS. EVIL DEAD 2
5 TENACIOUS D
6 SPIRIT TRAP
7 THE NATIVITY STORY
8 REYNA
9 BORAT
10 KAMA SUTRA 3

ERMITA

1 TENACIOUS D
2 REYNA
THE NATIVITY STORY
3 HAPPY FEET
4 CASINO ROYALE
5 SPIRIT TRAP
6 SHAOLIN VS. EVIL DEAD 2
7 KAMA SUTRA 3

METRO EAST

1 REYNA
2 HAPPY FEET
3 SHAOLIN VS. EVIL DEAD 2
4 THE NATIVITY STORY
5 TENACIOUS D
6 SPIRIT TRAP
7 CASINO ROYALE
8 BANG YAVA

NOVALICHES

1 CASINO ROYALE
2 HAPPY FEET
3 SHAOLIN VS. EVIL DEAD 2
4 REYNA

CITISQUARE MALABON / PIONEER

1 ANG PAMANA: THE INHERITANCE
2 REYNA
3 RESERVE
4 RESERVE
1 TENACIOUS D
2 HAPPY FEET
3 SHAOLIN VS. EVIL DEAD 2
4 SPIRIT TRAP

STA. ROSA / LIPA

STA. ROSA
1 CAKE
2 SANTA CLAUSE 3
3 MY FIRST WEDDING
4 DECK THE HALLS

LIPA
1 HAPPY FEET
2 THE RETURN
3 THE BUTTERFLY EFFECT 2
4 SCHOOL FOR SCOUNDRELS

DASMARIÑAS / ANGELES

DASMARIÑAS
1 FEAST
2 BARNYARD
3 SCHOOL FOR SCOUNDRELS
4 EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH

ANGELES
1 THE MARINE
2 ZU WARRIORS
3 SCHOOL FOR SCOUNDRELS
4 CARS

IMUS / STARMILLS

IMUS
1 HAPPY FEET
2 DECK THE HALLS
3 FEAST
4 REYNA

STARMILLS
1 HAPPY FEET
2 MEE-SHEE
3 REYNA
4 THE RETURN
5 FRAGILE
6 THE MARINE

BACOLOD / ILOILO

BACOLOD
1 FRAGILE
2 BARNYARD
3 HAPPY FEET
4 CASINO ROYALE
5 THE NATIVITY STORY
6 MEE-SHEE

ILOILO
1 FRAGILE
2 MEE-SHEE
3 HAPPY FEET
4 THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE

ROUNDUP

Star-studded bazaar

Child artists Gerard Xanier, Angel Locsin, Chynna Ortaleza, Valerie Concepcion and members of the "Starstruck" Final 6 Batch 3 will set up booths at the Ninth Noel Discovery Bazaar and Christmas Shopping Expo 2006 at the World Trade Center from tomorrow till Dec. 29.

Organized by UMA Network and Get Unlimited, the bazaar will also have live performances and auctions, with Sitti Cruz, Mike Tan, Mark Herras, Jackie Rice and Ann Bustamante Dec. 31 and Gerard Xanier, Angelle Jimenez, Mikki Pamero, Jhericho Habib and Jennylyn Mercado on Dec. 23.

For kids, there will be puppet shows and storytelling sessions, as well as concert and art camp led by the Art Kiddo Group.

The beneficiary organizations are the 100th Kapuso Foundation's Circle Club Alay sa Batang Pinoy, the Batang ng mga Bayani Foundation and the Association of Barangay Councilors Foundation.

Critics' choice

"Little Miss Sunshine," Fox Searchlight's road comedy about a dysfunctional American family, recently won three awards from the New York Film Critics—Best Favorite Cast, Best Debut as Director and one of the Ten Best Films of 2006.

The Los Angeles Film Critics gave the film trio-prize two: Michael Arndt and co-directors Jonathan Dayton and Valerie Faris the New Groove.

THE CAST of "Little Miss Sunshine"

"TRIUMPH of Life: Winning Teams"

tion Award.

The film is now showing in local theaters.

'Winning Teams'

The National Geographic Channel airs "Triumph of Life: Winning Teams" on Dec. 23 at 4 p.m. and Dec. 31 at 7 p.m.

In the ancient battle for life, animals that work in teams have become the most powerful on the planet. The show reveals the evolutionary forces that created these teams, and uncovers the secrets of social success.

Gozon Christmas

"Tonight's episode of "Pyoke" tackles the Pinoy Christmas in Scots, rigmled by a famous lighting ceremony.

The designs of laureens that come all the way from San Fernando, Pampanga.

Also to be featured is Alexander Lacson, author of "Twelve Globe Things Filipinos Can Do To Help Our Country."

The episode airs at 11 p.m., right after "Bandila" on ABS-CBN 2.